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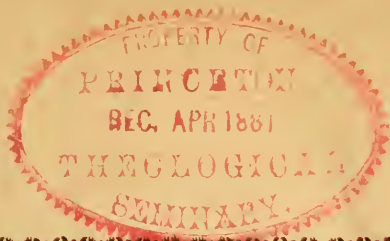
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I N T O T H E  
N A T U R E a n d D E S I G N  
O F  
B A P T I S M;  
I N W H I C H

The Necessity of it is proved,  
The Qualifications for it explained,  
A N D  
The Right of Infants to it asserted.

\*\*\*\*\*  
*Go ye therefore and Disciple all Nations, Baptizing them in the  
Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost:  
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded  
you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the  
world. Amen. MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.*  
\*\*\*\*\*

L O N D O N :

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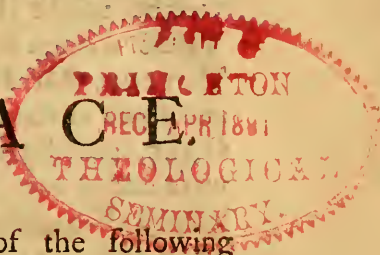
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# P R E F A C E.



AS the Subject of the following Treatise has been handled by so many Persons eminent for their Learning and Judgment, it cannot be expected but that many Observations will occur herein, which have before fallen under the Reader's notice. The Author has however this to say in its behalf, that the Plan of it is intirely new, and of his own forming, and that it was formed by him meerly out of what he had observed in a careful Examination of the holy Scriptures on this Point; though the principal Arguments contained herein were digested and ranged in their proper order many years ago, but a few have elapsed since they began to be committed to Writing, at the Instance of a Learned and Ingenious Friend. It would have been great Presumption to have undertaken the Decision of a Controversy so long, and so warmly debated, without making use of what Help might be procured from Writings of reputed excellency on the Subject.

That



That no Arguments therefore of Importance might escape the Author's notice, or be impaired in their strength; that no Objections of weight might be let slip unobviated, the Tracts written in the last Century by Bishop TAYLOR, Mr. BAXTER, and Mr. WALKER, and those in the present by WHITBY, WALL, GALE, and EMLYN were perused; to which were added two nameless, but ingenious and learned Pamphlets, published in the Years 1750 and 1751\*. These were all the Writings on the Subject which fell under the Author's inspection at the Time he undertook this Work; and that they were serviceable to him in it he is very sensible, though he is now at a loss where to make proper acknowledgments for those assistances which he received from them. Whatever Observations have been drawn from thence, they were so digested in his Thoughts, and incorporated into his Scheme, as to give him a just title to them, though he cannot value himself upon his being the first to whom they occurred; and what Improvements they have received under his Management the Reader must determine.

This, he thinks, may justly be said of it, that as the Scheme is new, so the Arguments  
are

\* The Titles of the Pamphlets here referred to are, "The Baptism of Infants a Reasonable Service". And "Dipping not the only Scriptural and Primitive Manner of Baptizing". Both of them worthy the Perusal of serious and intelligent Christians. Printed for J. WAUGH in Lombard-Street.

are set in a new light, as well as reduced into a regular order; and that as far as the Author's reading or discernment can discover, there are some Observations contained herein, which are quite new, and not before taken notice of; they were so at least to him 'till the three first Propositions were sent to the Press, and a considerable part of them printed off, though he has since had the satisfaction to find several hints of them in a Set of very judicious and learned Tracts published by Mr. CALEB FLEMING in the Year 1745; but intirely unknown to him 'till within a short time past; these, had he been so happy as to have seen them before, would have afforded him several important Observations in confirmation of his System, but all that he can now do, is to declare his Approbation of them.

There have also lately fallen into the Author's Hands some other Tracts on this Subject without a Name, which contain many valuable Remarks; but as they are chiefly employed in Proof of the Antiquity of Infant-Baptism, there is not so much to be expected from them in furtherance of his Design, however deserving of his Esteem they must be allowed to be, for the extensive Learning and critical Discernment to be discovered in them\*.

The

\* These Tracts are intitled, "Pædo-Baptism, or a Defence of Infant-Baptism in point of Antiquity". "Pædo-Baptism defended; or the Antiquity of Infant-Baptism further maintained". And "Pædo-Baptism the second Part; or a Defence

The Disadvantages under which the following Sheets appear in the World bespeak the Reader's Candour, at the same time that the well meant Intention of them, and the Approbation of the Judicious Friend under whose Inspection they are made publick, give encouragement to hope they will be useful.

The Author has not the vanity to think them free from all Defects; the Correction of such, or any Improvement which may be made on his Arguments, will be received by him with Pleasure and Thankfulness; but if they should be attacked with Passion and Party-Violence, or upon the Principles of Bigotry and Enthusiasm, such an Attack will be treated with the Contempt it justly deserves. If any thing contained herein be deemed repugnant to the Accounts given of Baptism by the Primitive Fathers, this matter will perhaps receive a due Consideration, if the present Treatise meets with a favourable Reception.

“ Defence of the Authority of Infant-Baptism, in Answer to  
“ the common Objections against it ”. Printed for J. WAUGH.



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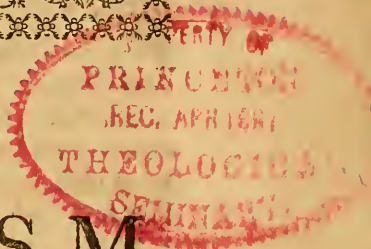
## BAPTISM.

THE Sacrament of Baptism is undoubtedly an Ordinance of an arbitrary and positive nature, and the obligation to observe it is derived entirely from the Command, and founded on the Authority of Christ; such an authority he claimed in the course of his Ministry, and he vindicated his right to it not only from the Prophecies of MOSES and the Prophets concerning him, but by a great number of surprising and unparalleled Miracles: when he came to close his Ministry on Earth, he renewed this claim in a very strong and explicit manner, as a foundation for that Commission which he gave his Apostles to carry on that work which he had begun.

*All Power, says our blessed Lord, is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth; Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. MATTHEW xxviii. 18,*

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19, 20. This Commission is of a very comprehensive and important nature, and contains in it those full Powers with which Christ invested the Apostles for founding and establishing his Kingdom. The first part of it contains directions for admitting persons into the Church of Christ, *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.* And as this is the plainest and fullest account we have of the institution of Baptism, we have reason to expect the clearest discoveries of the nature and design of this Sacrament, from a careful and critical examination of this Command of Christ.

That our inquiries therefore into this Subject may be strict and impartial, before I make any observations with a view to determine the direct intention of this Ordinance, I shall endeavour, in as plain a manner as I can, to ascertain the sense and meaning of the words by which it is enjoined.

*All Power is given unto me in Heaven, and in Earth.* i. e. ‘I have not only declared to you  
 ‘ in my Preaching, but convinced you by my  
 ‘ Miracles, and especially by my Resurrection  
 ‘ from the Dead, that I am possessed of a divine  
 ‘ power and authority, qualifying me to injoin  
 ‘ such Observances as are proper for the founding  
 ‘ and enlarging that Kingdom of which I am constituted the supreme Ruler and Lawgiver. In  
 ‘ pursuance of this, as I am now about to leave  
 ‘ you, and the propagation of that Religion, which  
 ‘ I came into the world to establish, to your care,  
 ‘ I give you, whom I appoint to be the chief Ministers and Administrators of my Kingdom, a  
 ‘ Commission to carry on the great work of converting mankind to the knowledge and profession of Christianity; you are hereby empowered  
 ‘ to



to further and accomplish that blessed purpose of reforming the world, and I therefore command you by virtue of that authority, which I have received from the Father, to be diligent and active in the execution of it'.

Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, μαθητευσατε, *teach*, i. e. make Profelytes and Disciples in all Nations. Just as it is said of Jesus, *that he made and baptized more disciples than John*. JOHN IV. 1. for μαθητευειν and ποιειν μαθητας, the original words here used, have directly the same signification. The word μαθητευω is used but three times besides in the New Testament; in all which places this rendering of it seems most natural, though it be in some of them translated in a different manner. The first is MATTHEW xiii. 52. where it is said, *every Scribe instructed*, μαθητευθεις, *into the Kingdom of God*, &c. but had been more justly rendered, *every Scribe who is disciplined into the Kingdom of God, or become a disciple of the Messiah*. The next place is MATTHEW xxvii. 57. where it is related of JOSEPH of ARIMATHEA, *that he was disciplined to Christ*, εμαθητευσε τω Ιησου, or as it is rendered, *he was Jesus Disciple*. The other place is ACTS xiv. 21. where it is said of PAUL and BARNABAS, *that they preached the Gospel at DERBE and taught*, μαθητευσαντες, i. e. *discipled many, or made many disciples and converts there*.

These places, if rendered literally, and the word μαθητευω be construed *teach*, can scarce be allowed to be good English; for I apprehend, there can be no proper meaning fixed to a person's being *instructed* or *taught into the Kingdom of Heaven*, εις την βασιλειαν των ουρανων; nor is it sense to say, that JOSEPH was taught or instructed to Jesus, τω Ιησου; and in the last Text, though it be good sense, yet their being taught is manifestly included in the

words foregoing, *viz.* preaching the Gospel, and must therefore be added unnecessarily ; whereas, if the word μαθητεω be rendered *disciple*, every one of these passages admits of a just and grammatical construction, and such as is perfectly agreeable with the design of their being introduced : and I think there can be no room to entertain the least doubt of this being the true meaning of the word, if we consider that it is so used by some of the best of the Greek authors, who wrote about the same time with the Evangelists ; thus PLUTARCH says of ISOCRATES, “ that THEOPOMPUS was discipled “ to him ”, *εμαθητευσε δε αυτω και Θεοπομπος*. PLUT. in Vit. ISOCRAT. which is an expression exactly parallel to that which relates to JOSEPH of ARIMATHEA. MATTHEW xxvii. 57. and the word is used in the very same sense by JUSTIN MARTYR, speaking of some persons then living, of sixty or seventy years of age, who were discipled, or made disciples to Christ in their childhood, *οι εκ παιδων εμαθητευθησαν τω Χριστω*. Apol. 2.

Let me only add, that without allowing this interpretation of the words, there will be a manifest tautology in them, and the same thing will be immediately repeated in a manner quite unsuitable to the dignity of this Commission, *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, Baptizing them*, and immediately after *teaching them*, &c. For these or other reasons most learned men, however they have differed in their sentiments with respect to the Subjects of Baptism, have agreed in allowing *disciple* to be the most exact and just translation.

How this discipling and profelyting the nations to him is to be performed, is what our blessed Lord next proceeds to direct, and it consists of two parts ; first, *baptizing them*, *βαπτίζοντες*, and then *teaching them*, *διδασκοντες*, for both these words  
have

have an equal relation to the verb *μαθιτευσате* *disciple*.

The first thing Christ commands them to do is to *Baptize* them; the word βαπτίζω, *Baptize*, usually signifies in Scripture *to wet*, or *wash* \*, and has its derivation from the religious observances of this kind among the Jews; for we are told, *HEBREWS* ix. 10. that a great part of their ritual service consisted in *divers washings*, διαφόροις βαπτισμοῖς, *divers kinds of washings, baptisms of different natures, and for different ends*: thus Christ observes of them, that having received it from the religious *Traditions of their Elders, except they wash*, βαπτισονται, *baptize their hands, they eat not*; and that there were many other things which they received and held, as the *washings*, βαπτισμοί, *Baptisms of Cups and Pots, brazen Vessels and Tables*. MARK vii. 3, 4.

If we look into the Law of MOSES, we shall find *washing* enjoined upon several accounts; it was used by way of purification from legal defilements. *LEVITICUS* xv. and xvii. 15. it was used also in the consecration of the Priests and Levites to their office. *EXODUS* xxix. 4. and xl. 12. *LEVITICUS* viii. 6. *NUMBERS* viii. 7, 21. and whenever the Priests entered into the Tabernacle for the performance of its solemn service, they also washed, *EXODUS* xl. 32. There was also a *washing* enjoined to all the People of Israel when they drew near to mount SINAI to receive the Law from God. *EX-*

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ODUS

\* The general and most comprehensive signification of the word βαπτω, from which βαπτίζω is a diminutive, is *to wet*, and it is used for wetting either by sprinkling, affusion, or dipping, and that either for the purposes of *washing, dying, or bathing*; as might be made appear from a great number of instances, had I room for them, and it belonged to my subject.

ODUS xix. 10, 14. and before that time the whole Nation of the Jews was separated to God, under the conduct of MOSES, by a religious *washing*, or *Baptism*; for we find this expressly asserted by the Apostle. 1 CORINTHIANS x. 2. *They were all baptized unto Moses in the Cloud, and in the Sea*: this could not indeed be called *washing* in the strict and ordinary sense of the word, they were not plunged, or bathed in water, for we are told, that *the waters stood upright as an Heap, and were as a Wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left.* EXODUS xiv. 22. xv. 8. so that they could only be *wetted* and *sprinkled* by the water that proceeded from the Cloud and the Sea; and the like may be observed with regard to their other washings, that in most cases it was not thought necessary that the whole body should be washed with water; indeed, in some instances of legal uncleanness, the whole body was to be *washed*, or *bathed* in water, LEVITICUS xv. 13, 16.

There was also *a washing* instituted to be used in the consecration of AARON and his Sons to the Priesthood, but this appears from the execution of the appointment, related EXODUS xl. 31. to be no more than *washing their Hands and their Feet*. A less degree of *washing* was required of the People of Israel when they were sanctified and prepared for the reception of the Law from God, for then they were only to *wash their Clothes*. EXODUS xix. 10, 14. Nor was any more demanded in some of the lower degrees of Defilement. LEVITICUS xi. 25, 40. NUMBERS xxxi. 24. Nay, in the separation of the Levites to their office, there was only added to this of washing their Clothes, the *sprinkling of water of Purification upon them*. NUMBERS viii. 7. And this last and lowest kind of washing was sometimes allowed of in the purification of the  
the



the unclean, without any else joined with it. NUMBERS XIX. 18. HEBREWS IX. 13.

There being so great a diversity in the washings or baptisms enjoined by the Law of MOSES, with regard both to the mode and design of them, it is reasonable to think, that when the Rite of Baptism was adopted by Christ, it must be with one or other of those views, and in some or other of these modes and forms.

The mode used in the Baptism of the first disciples has been supposed by many to be that of immersing, or bathing the whole Body in Water ; and this supposition is chiefly founded on those Texts wherein Christians are said to be *buried with Christ in Baptism*. ROMANS VI. 4. COLOSSIANS II. 12. but these expressions are plainly figurative, denoting only the inward and moral change formed or intended by embracing the Christian Profession ; and I think require no more of an external resemblance to explain them, than those other phrases, *being crucified with Christ*, and *circumcised with the Circumcision of Christ*, with which they are conjoined.

If we are to take Metaphors for our guides in this matter, there are others which denote only a partial washing of the body, or a pouring, or sprinkling water upon it, which have at least an equal claim to our regard ; but these last, I apprehend, are more than figurative expressions, and have a direct reference to those Baptismal Institutions, under the Law of MOSES, from which Christian Baptism is derived ; which (as I shall make evident in the sequel) are no other than the Consecration of the Priests and Levites to their Office ; for the former of these had only their hands and their feet washed, and the latter were only sprinkled with water for this purpose : and



there is a manifest allusion to both these in the apostolick representations of Christian Baptism, it is called the Laver, *λετρων*, or *washing of Regeneration*, TITUS iii. 5. with reference to the Laver in the Tabernacle and Temple, at which the Priests were washed when they were consecrated; and sprinkling is connected with the baptismal washing of the body, HEBREWS x. 22. with a view to the sprinkling of the Levites for the same end: and indeed there are many circumstances attending the Baptisms related in the ACTS of the Apostles, which afford the highest probability that they must have been performed in one or other of these ways, but could not by that of a total immersion or dipping †.

The next article of the Commission points out the Persons into whom, or into whose name Christians are to be baptized, *Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost*; *εις το ονομα τε πατρος, &c.* being baptized into a Person, or into the Name of a Person, signifies, in the New Testament, being subjected to the authority, guidance, and protection of that Person; thus the Israelites are said to be *baptized into Moses*, *εις του Μωσην*, when they put themselves under his protection, and acknowledged him to be their Leader and Lawgiver, of which they gave a most indisputable proof, by following him into a wide and boisterous sea while the waters stood up inheaps on each side of them.

It is upon this footing that St. PAUL demands of the *Corinthians*, a Party of whom had set him

† The sufficiency of a partial washing or sprinkling in this Ordinance is, I think, much countenanced by the consideration that βαπτίζω is a diminutive from βαπτω, and as this signifies *to wet*, so that must signify *to wet a little*, which is done by Affusion or Sprinkling.

him up as their Head and Master, in opposition to others who had set up APOLLOS and CEPHAS, upon a level with Christ, *were ye baptized into the Name of Paul? ες το ονομα* i. e. “ Did I ever, “ when I baptized any of you, claim an authority over you, or demanded any subjection from you, as your Lawgiver and Ruler, and “ why then should you presume to detract from “ the sovereignty of Christ, by exalting me in “ opposition to him, who was crucified for you, “ and into whom ye were baptized, and thereby “ acknowledged him to be your only Lord and “ Master ”? Baptizing then *into Christ*, or the *Name of Christ*, signifies being subjected to his authority and government, his protection and guidance. When therefore the Apostles are commanded to *Baptize all Nations, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost*, the meaning is. “ Devote them to the worship and service of the great God who created them, to the love and obedience of Christ, the Son of God who redeemed them, and to the guidance and assistance of the holy Ghost, who renews and sanctifies them; by this means they will be admitted into that Covenant of Grace which was contrived by the Father, purchased by the Son, and confirmed and sealed by the holy Spirit ”.

The next direction contains the other essential and necessary part of making disciples, *viz.* teaching them.—*Disciple all Nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*

The word here translated *teaching*, *διδασκοντες*, is different from that which is translated in the same manner in the foregoing verse, and properly signifies the instruction of a Parent or Master inculcated on his Children or Scholars; such instructions

structions the Apostles were ordered to convey in consequence of their Baptism to all those who were admitted into the School of Christ thereby; they were to be well informed in the knowledge of the grand Principles of Christianity, and directed and perswaded to an obedience to all its necessary and useful duties; some of these Christ had revealed to his Apostles in his preaching, and in his discourses to them after his Resurrection, *when he opened their Understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures.* LUKE xxiv. 45. And whatever was then omitted necessary to the knowledge or observance of Christianity, was abundantly communicated at the pouring out the holy Ghost upon them soon after Christ's Ascension, according to his promise to them. JOHN xiv. 26. *But the Comforter, which is the holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* The sense then of this Paragraph of the Commission is this. "The Nations  
 " are not only to be admitted into my Religion  
 " by Baptism, but they are also to be taught the  
 " doctrines and rules of it; and if they will be  
 " true disciples, and compleat Christians, they  
 " must believe those doctrines, learn those rules,  
 " and observe those injunctions which I have de-  
 " clared, or shall communicate to you, and in  
 " which you are to instruct them".

The last clause of the Commission contains our blessed Lord's promise of the perpetual direction and assistance of his holy Spirit, not only to qualify and enable his Apostles, and their Successors, to perform the duties of their Ministry in forming and establishing his Church and Kingdom, but likewise to influence those who should become members of it, and bestow on them those privi-  
 leges

leges or blessings, which were intended to be communicated in consequence of their being admitted as his disciples by Baptism. *And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World.* i. e.

“ Though I am now going to leave you, in regard of my bodily Presence, yet I will continue with you by means of the holy Spirit, to direct, assist, and support you and all my followers in the performance of this and every duty and exercise to which you shall be called for the increase and perfecting my Church; and that not for a short time only, and as long as you shall remain in the world, but I will continue my Presence with all those who shall succeed you in faithfully carrying on the same work, even until the period and consummation of all things”.

The words in the Original are *εως συντελειας το αιωνος*, *until the end of the Age*; in order to understand the meaning of which expression, it must be observed, that there are two remarkable Ages or Periods of Time spoken of in the New Testament, into which the Jews had been accustomed to divide the time of the World's duration; one of them previous to the coming of the Messiah, the other that which succeeds it; the former of these had its end at the Resurrection of our Saviour, for not till then did he appear as the Messiah: so that when he gives this Commission to his Apostles, and tells them that it was to continue in force *to the end of the Age*, he must certainly mean, and they must certainly understand him to mean, that Age upon which they were then entered; for to suppose him to mean the former Age, which was expired, is to suppose him to appoint an Institution which was never to be put in practice; and if Baptism is to continue to the end of the latter Period, as it is here appointed by our blessed Saviour,



viour, then it cannot be an Ordinance of a temporary nature, nor be intended to be confined to the Apostolick Age, but must be designed for all Ages of the World, and for all persons who should be admitted into the school of Christ, and have the privilege of being instructed into the doctrines and rules of the Gospel.

Thus have I given you as short and as plain an explication of the words of the Commission, as my design would admit. You will readily perceive that they consist of three Parts. I. A Commission or Injunction to the Apostles, to make disciples amongst all nations. II. An Account of the manner how these disciples were to be made, and that was by baptizing them, and then teaching them the doctrines and duties of Christianity. III. A promise of all necessary assistance, for the furtherance of this work, unto the end of Time. If you keep this division of the words in mind, you will be better able to judge of the propriety of the Observations or Propositions which I shall deduce from them, for the discovery of the nature and design of this Ordinance, the qualifications of those to whom it is to be administered, and the duties and privileges attendant upon it.

#### PROPOSITION I.

The direct intention of the Ordinance of Baptism is to initiate persons into the Christian Religion; to devote and consecrate them to Christ, and to make them visible and acknowledged members and subjects of his Church and Kingdom.

In the explication of our Lord's Commission to the Apostles, I have observed, that Baptisms among the Jews were of divers kinds, and intended



tended for different purposes \* ; but I believe upon the nicest and most critical examination, they may be all reduced to these two Heads, *viz.* Baptisms of Purification, and Baptisms of Dedication or Consecration.

The Baptism of JOHN the Baptist, eminently so called from the great Numbers which he baptized, I think is indisputably of the former kind; it is called *the Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins.* MARK i. 4. LUKE iii. 3. and those who were baptized of him are said to be *baptized confessing their Sins.* MATTHEW iii. 6. Now *John did no Miracles.* JOHN x. 41. neither did he claim any authority, or manifest the least design, to introduce a new religion among the Jews, and though many took him to be a Prophet, and even the Messiah, yet he absolutely disclaims this character. JOHN i. 21. and he assumed no other character or office than that of *a Preacher of the Baptism of Repentance.* MARK i. 4. ACTS xiii. 24. *and that of a Messenger sent to prepare the Way* for the opening of the Gospel Dispensation. MARK i. 2. JOHN i. 23. *To make ready a people prepared for the Lord; and to go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.* LUKE i. 17, 76. and all that distinguished him as a Prophet was that *he was to go before the Messiah in the spirit*

\* I do not apprehend that there is a necessity of a distinct proof that the words, *διαφοροις βαπτισμοις*, do not signify merely many Baptisms, but such as are of different Intentions, since I have in my explication of the words of Institution, produced several Instances that they were so. I shall only therefore add, that this is the constant signification of the word *διαφορος* in all Authors; and though it is used but once more in the New Testament, it is plainly in the same sense, ROMANS xii. 6. *Having then Gifts, differing, χαρισματα διαφορα, according to the Grace that is given unto us, &c.* and there are Instances of their difference immediately adjoined by the Apostle.

*spirit and power of Elias.* LUKE i. 17. that he was the last of all the Jewish Prophets, and he was to usher in that great Prophet which was expected to come into the world; accordingly we never find that any persons are said *to be baptized into John, or into the Name of John*, as they are into MOSES and Christ, who were not only Prophets, but Law-givers, and published a new revelation of the divine Will.

If it be asked then, Into what were the disciples of JOHN baptized by his Baptism? The account which JOHN gives of himself and his Baptism will furnish us with an easy answer, *viz.* That it was only into a Renunciation of their former Sins and Errors, and into an expectation of the Kingdom of the Messiah, which was ready to be revealed. But why should he baptize them on this account, since many of the Jewish Prophets came upon the same errand with him, exhorting to repentance, and foretelling the appearance of the Messiah, and yet never presumed to baptize any; and as he had no higher pretensions than theirs, why should he take upon him to baptize any more than they? This was the question put to JOHN by the Priests and Levites, who were of the Sect of the Pharisees, a Sect very well acquainted with the religious customs and traditions of the Jews. *Why baptizest thou, say they, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that Prophet?* JOHN i. 25.

To give light into the reason of their demand, it must be observed, that it was a well known and well established custom among the Jews, when any persons became Converts and Profelytes to their religion, from among the Heathens, to admit them with a becoming solemnity into it, by baptizing them with water, denoting by this significative Ceremony the washing away their sinful Idolatries  
and

and Superstitions, and separating them to the Worship and Service of the true God. This custom was probably derived either from the Baptism of MOSES when he purged the whole nation of Israel from those Impurities which they had contracted by their residence among the idolatrous Ægyptians, in order to enter them into that Religion which he was about to establish, by baptizing them in the Red Sea; or, as the Jewish Writers assert, from the command which MOSES received and executed, just before the giving the Law from Mount SINAI, to \* sanctify all the people, and let them wash their clothes. EXODUS xix. 10, 14. by which rite they were put in order to be consecrated to God, and entered into Covenant with him, and prepared for the reception of the divine Commandments.

Whichsoever of these gave occasion to the custom, it was plainly used with an intent to prepare them for Initiation into the Mosaick Religion; and it was not designed merely that the new proselytes should renounce their former Errors by Baptism, but there was also a new Religion into which they were to be initiated, and entered thereupon. But the Case was very different with regard to JOHN's Baptism, they were not Heathens whom he baptized, but Jews; and though he demanded of them Repentance, and a renunciation of their former Errors and Sins, yet he had no new Doctrine to teach them, he instituted no fresh Religion to enter them into; and this was what the Pharisees could not account for, with regard to his Baptism,

\* The word *sanctify* in several Places of Scripture seems to signify *wash*, or *baptize*; sanctifying the Priests and Levites was performed by washing; and when persons were purified from any Uncleaness by washing with water, they are said to be *sanctified*. LEVITICUS vi. 27. 2 SAMUEL xi. 4.

Baptism, and was the foundation of the difficulty contained in their question to him. It is plain therefore, that the Baptism of JOHN could not take in both these intentions, for in that case they would not have been at a loss about his baptizing, it must therefore be intended by way of Purification only, agreeably to what he himself declares.

There was another difficulty started by the Jews, on occasion of Christ, or his disciples, taking upon them to baptize, when JOHN had not yet finished his course, but continued still *baptizing in Ennon, near to Salim*. JOHN iii. 25. The question we are told arose between some of JOHN's disciples and the Jews, and it was *about purifying*, *περι καθαρismus*, a word frequently used in the Old and New Testament, for washing by way of religious Purification. I think it is evident from the manner of the disciples stating the question to JOHN, that it is here meant of Purification by Baptism; they relate the matter thus in the very next words, *ver.* 26. *Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.* The sense of which words, as they have a reference to the foregoing, I apprehend to be this. “ Master we are greatly im-  
 “ barrased by an Objection which the Jews have  
 “ thrown in our way against your Baptism; for  
 “ he whom you baptized on the other side of  
 “ JORDAN, and whom you declared to be such an  
 “ extraordinary Prophet, that he should baptize  
 “ with the holy Ghost and with Fire, this very  
 “ same Person is now Baptizing with water, with  
 “ a Baptism of Repentance and Purification only,  
 “ just in the same manner as you do; now we are  
 “ much perplexed by the Jews, to account for  
 “ this, for in their apprehension it supposes that  
 “ your Baptism is invalid or insufficient, and what  
 “ this



“ this man is sent to amend and perfect ; and yet  
 “ that he is not as you foretold the Person who  
 “ was to come baptizing with a much higher and  
 “ nobler kind of Baptism.”

Had this dispute between JOHN's disciples and the Jews been about any of the common legal Purifications enjoined by MOSES, it would not have been of sufficient importance for them to trouble their Master about it, since it no way concerned him ; or had they been so impertinent, they would certainly have related the affair in a different way, and have specified the particular sorts of Purification which they had a debate about : but as they only proposed their inquiry in such a form as evidently shews it to have a relation to his Baptism, and that of Christ, I think it is plain that this was the subject of their debate ; and as this was a matter in which the honour and veracity of their Master was much concerned, they had great reason to refer the case to him, and to expect satisfaction from him ; so that this relation is a strong confirmation that the Baptism of JOHN was only a Baptism of Repentance and Purification, and that the Jews as well as JOHN's own disciples, at this time, understood it to be so.

The Jews indeed had at first a different notion of JOHN's Baptism, believing him to be the Messiah, and apprehending that he was initiating his followers into his kingdom by this Rite ; this seems evident, for had they then looked upon it to be a Baptism of Purification only, it cannot be supposed that they would have expressed any surprise at it, since those baptismal Purifications were so common amongst them, and were daily made use of by all ranks and degrees ; but being satisfied by JOHN, with regard to their first difficulty, by his declaration that it was not a Baptism

tism of Initiation, but of Purification which he administered, they had now started a second, founded upon this supposition, that it was, as he had said, a Baptism of Purification.

It may perhaps be thought strange, that JOHN should fix upon such a sign of that Repentance and Remission of Sins which he preached, as this of Baptism, or washing by way of Purification, which was so wretchedly perverted and superstitiously used by the Jews, and the abuse of which was severely censured by our Saviour. MATTHEW x. 2, 11, 20. MARK vii. 6, 7, 8, 9. LUKE xi. 39. But it will be sufficient to account for this if it be considered, that this ceremony was probably shown in order that the meaning and design of it might be readily apprehended by the Jews, it having been at all times used by way of purifying the gentile Profelytes from their idolatrous corruptions; and though it was pretty much the same as to its form and general intention, it had a much nobler signification than their ritual washings, and such as was sufficiently shewn forth by the manner of its administration; for there was plainly this difference between them, the washings practised by the Jews were private and performed by the persons themselves who were superstitiously fond of this ceremony; that of JOHN was administered by him in a publick character, that of a Prophet; it was administered by him to a great number of persons in a publick way, and the whole nation of the Jews were called and invited by his preaching to partake of his Baptism.

There was also this yet more material difference, the Jewish washings were intended for their Purification from bodily defilements, or such as were merely ritual and peculiar to their Law, but  
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the Baptism of JOHN was designed as a mark of Purification from internal and spiritual impurities, from those vices and errors with which their souls were tainted and defiled; and when the Jews came to be baptized of him, they were exhorted not to rest satisfied with the participation of the external Rite, as they were wont to do with regard to these ritual Purifications, but to be careful that their souls might be purified and cleansed from all iniquity, and labour to bring forth *fruits meet for Repentance*, which it was the intent of the external ceremony to be an ingagement to. MATTHEW iii. 8. LUKE iii. 8—15.

There seems to have been a great expediency for such an Institution among the Jews, to prepare them for the coming of Christ. They were a people exceedingly degenerate both in doctrine and manners; they had not only corrupted the doctrines of Religion and made the *Commandments of God of none effect by their Traditions*. MATTHEW xv. 6. but they were also grossly corrupt and vitious in their moral conduct, so that JOHN calls them *a Generation of Vipers*. LUKE xiii. 7. and the whole nation is described by the Apostle PAUL, who had the fairest opportunities of being acquainted with their character, in such black colours, that scarce any thing more shocking can be imagined. ROMANS iii. 9—19. Such an universal pollution and degeneracy seems therefore to have demanded a peculiar Prophet to call them to Repentance and forsaking their sins, and to prepare them for the reception of the spiritual doctrine and rules of Christianity, of which this baptismal Purification was a very significative sign.

The former of these intentions of JOHN's Baptism was plainly declared, and doubtless clearly apprehended by the Jews, but the other end in-

tended by it, probably, was not discerned or distinguished by them, which was the preparing them for the reception of the Gospel by baptizing them as Proselytes from the Jewish Law and Religion; which was a thing they had no conception of, as it was a general imagination amongst them, that their Dispensation was to be of perpetual duration, and was only to be purified and advanced to its highest perfection under the conduct of the Messiah; and yet this is what JOHN declares from the Prophecies of the Old Testament.

I am apprehensive it may be here alledged, that our blessed Lord was baptized with the Baptism of JOHN, which could not therefore be a Baptism of Repentance and Purification only, since he had no sin to repent of, no defilements from which he needed to be purified, *he did no sin, but was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.* I PETER ii. 22. HEBREWS vii. 26. And for what reason then should Christ be baptized, with a Baptism which was intended only for the Remission of Sins? This was a difficulty which JOHN himself was very sensible of, for when Jesus came to be baptized of JOHN we are told, *he forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* MATTHEW iii. 14. *i. e.* “ The Baptism which I baptize with is designed for sinners such as I am, and therefore it would be much more proper for me to be baptized with this Baptism by you, who are perfectly sinless.” And Christ plainly allows that JOHN had sufficient reason for this scruple by the answer he gives him, verse 15. *Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness.* *i. e.* as it is usually interpreted, “ I allow there appears an impropriety in it, yet I entreat you not to hinder me, if for no other reason yet for this, that



“ that I may pay my regard for this Institution of  
 “ Righteousness which you have received from  
 “ God, and that by my Example others who  
 “ have need of it may be encouraged to comply  
 “ with it.”

I think it is evident, from what follows, that there was a further reason for our Lord's submitting to be baptized, for we are told in the following verses, that *Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and lighting upon him. And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This Descent of the holy Ghost upon Jesus was before revealed to JOHN to be the distinguishing mark by which he should know the Messiah, for he tells us. JOHN i. 33. *He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he who baptizeth with the holy Ghost; and accordingly John saw, and bare record that this was the Son of God, or the Messiah, verse 34.* and the voice from heaven was a full confirmation of this, which declared, *Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased* \*: but this heavenly voice was not, I apprehend, intended merely to be a declaration of Jesus being the Messiah, but it was an attestation of his solemn designation and separation to that office by his

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Baptism,

\* It is worthy observation, that *Clemens Alexandrinus* quotes this Text thus, *Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I begotten thee.* i. e. “ I not only hereby declare thee to be the Messiah, but constitute and appoint thee to that office.” Whether the Copies then generally used had this reading of the words is uncertain, but it is clear from his application of them, that he understood this to be their true meaning and design. CLEMEN. Lib. Pædag. Cap. 7.

Baptism, for Christ is said *to be anointed with the holy Ghost*. ACTS x. 38. and this was at his Baptism when the holy Ghost descended and rested upon him.

This expression which the Apostle PETER uses, in describing the descent of the holy Ghost upon our blessed Lord, is evidently derived from that antient rite of anointing persons with Oil, when they were invested with any high Office or Dignity; and this was an institution founded on divine authority, it being appointed by God to be used in the Consecration of Kings, Priests, and Prophets, as may be seen EXODUS xxix. 7. 1 SAMUEL xvi. 12, 13. 1 KINGS xix. 16. and in many other places: and as this anointing of the holy Jesus, by pouring down the holy Ghost upon him, was done in conformity to the antient usages religiously observed amongst the Jews, so it is reasonable to conclude, that this Baptism with water, which accompanied it, was intended with a religious regard to some other institution amongst them of a like significancy; it may therefore be well supposed, that when our Saviour insisted upon JOHN's permitting him to be baptized, as a means *of fulfilling all righteousness*, he had a view to some particular Law or Ordinance by which this ceremony was enjoined, and an obedience to which he thought necessary.

The Commission which JOHN had for Baptizing it is plain was not the Command which Christ had in view, since JOHN at first denied him Baptism; and the design of his Baptism, as a Baptism of Repentance, was utterly incongruous to the state and character of our blessed Lord; and the admitting of it upon such a footing would have been so far from acting in conformity to JOHN's Commission, that it would have been done  
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in a direct opposition to the design of it. The *fulfilling all righteousness* here intended by Christ, must therefore have a reference to some other Precept by which this Baptifmal washing was in-joined, and this could be no where contained but in the Law of MOSES ; and if we consult this we shall find, that when the anointing with Oil is commanded there also Baptizing or Washing with Water is injoined, both of them associated together, and used in the same order as they were in the case of our Saviour, and both of them intended by way of Consecration and Dedication to God.

The instance I have in view is that of the Consecration of the High Priest, and others of that rank to their office ; the command for this we have EXODUS xxix. and the relation of its execution LEVITICUS viii. The several parts of this ceremony were the washing or baptizing them, the anointing them with Oil, putting on the sacred garments upon them, and offering the sacrifices of Consecration for them ; by the performance of these things they are said *to be sanctified and hallowed, and consecrated.* EXODUS xxviii. 41. and xxix. 1, 9. words which plainly denote their solemn separation to their office, and their investiture with all its powers and dignities.

Now this will lead us to an inquiry, what there was in the character of our blessed Saviour which bears a resemblance to that of the Jewish High Priests ; whether he was consecrated to his office in a manner similiar to theirs, and, consequently, whether his Baptism was not an essential and principal part of this Consecration. Christ is represented by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews under the character of *the High Priest of our Profession.* HEBREWS iii. 1. and *the High Priest*

*over the House or Church of God. x. 21. And there is a parallel drawn throughout a great part of that Epistle between the Priesthood of Christ and that of AARON, with an intent to prove the former vastly more excellent, as to dignity and usefulness, than the latter; and that our Lord's consecration, or divine appointment to that office, was also in a just conformity to that of AARON. The same Writer very plainly asserts. HEBREWS v. 4, 5. No Man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron; so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

Here then we have a full declaration, that our blessed Lord had a full designation to his office of Priesthood in like manner (for thus the word *καθαπερ* signifies in other places of the New Testament) as AARON had; and accordingly we find, that the very same words by which the Consecration of the Priests is described, are used with regard to our High Priest, Christ Jesus; thus he is said to be *sanctified*, or *hallowed*; and this is what he declares concerning himself. JOHN x. 36. *Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, ηγιασε, (the same word which is used for the sanctifying the Jewish Priests. EXODUS xxviii. 41. and xxix. 1.) and sent into the world, thou blasphemest because I said I am the Son of God. The word sanctified, in its proper and genuine signification, denotes a solemn and formal destination and separation to some office or service, and must therefore undoubtedly be here used in that sense by our blessed Saviour; and as this is spoken of as something already done and conferred on him by the Father, so it is also here supposed, that this attestation had been given him in so publick a manner as to be a sufficient proof*



proof to the Jews that he was, what he declared himself to be, *the Son of God*. It is as if he had said. "It seems very strange that you should charge me with blasphemy in taking upon me this title and character, since ye all know, or might have known, that it was given me from heaven from my Father, and therefore I have undoubted reason to lay claim to it."

This then being an Appeal to the Jews, as to some publick attestation from heaven to Christ's being *the Son of God*, which they were, or might be supposed to be, well acquainted with, plainly determines it to have a reference either to the Baptism or the Transfiguration of Christ, at both which times, and at no other, he was owned and acknowledged by a voice from heaven to be *the Son of God*: that it could not be the latter of these, is evident from its being done in a very private manner, and before very few witnesses, and those engaged to the strictest secrecy; for we are told, that there were only present PETER, and JAMES, and JOHN; that it was on a high Mountain apart by themselves, and that as they came down from the Mountain, *Jesus charged them, that they should tell no man what things they had seen, until the Son of man was risen from the dead*; and that accordingly they kept that saying with themselves. MATTHEW xvii. 1 and 9. MARK ix. 2, 9, 10.

This could not be appealed to for the conviction of the Jews, who must be ignorant of the whole transaction, and our Saviour could therefore only have a reference to that attestation to his divine mission which was given him at his Baptism; and this was done in the most open and publick manner, while JOHN was baptizing in Jordan, whither great multitudes of Jews, both Pharisees and Sadducees, resorted to him to be baptized;

tized; many of whom were doubtless eye-witnesses of that glorious appearance which descended from heaven and lighted upon him, and heard the heavenly voice pronounce those words, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* So that we have here a very plain account, that Christ was sanctified or separated to his office by his Baptism, and consequently, that this was the intent and meaning of the Baptism with which he was baptized.

There is another word used in the relation of the solemn Inauguration of the legal High Priest, which is also made use of with regard to our blessed Saviour, which, though it has no direct relation to his Baptism, I think it proper to take some notice of, as it may be of service in confirming the account I have given of it; the word I have in view is *consecrate*, *τετελειωμενος*, it is used with regard to AARON and his sons. EXODUS xxix. 9. and it is applied to our blessed Saviour. HEBREWS vii. 28. and in both places translated in the same manner: when it is spoken of Christ indeed in other places it is rendered *being made perfect*; we have an instance of this, HEBREWS v. 9. *Being made perfect*, *τελειωθεις*, *he became the author of eternal salvation*; and this seems to be the original and genuine signification of the word; this is the meaning of it when it is used with regard to the Jewish High Priests. EXODUS xxix. 9. it is spoken after three parts of the instaurating service were performed, and when only the fourth or finishing ceremony remained, when it is said, *and thou shalt consecrate*, *τελειωσεις*, AARON and his sons, i. e. “ Thus shalt thou compleat and perfect their solemn Dedication.\* ”

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\* The original signifies filling the Hands, or indowing with the full Power and Authority of their Commission; and  
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This we find in the following verses was done by offering the sacrifice which was appointed by God for this purpose, which was therefore called a *Sacrifice of Consecration*; and the like may be observed of the application of the term to our blessed Lord, he is said to be consecrated or *to be made perfect*, τελειῶσαι, *through sufferings*. HEBREWS ii. 10. His offering himself up on the Cross was not only a Propitiation for the sins of the world, but it was a sacrifice of Consecration to qualify him for that high dignity to which he was exalted, as we are told in the verse foregoing, *that for the suffering of Death he was crowned with glory and honour*; then it was that he received his full authority to execute every part of his office, the largest extent of his power and dominion; and this is agreeable to our blessed Lord's own account of the intention of his Death; for speaking of that he says, *I cast out Devils, and do Cures to day and to-morrow, and the third Day I shall be perfected*, τελειοῦμαι. LUKE xiii. 32. And we find accordingly, that when his sufferings were compleated at his Resurrection from the Dead, he is again declared by the Father to be the Son of God, with this particular restriction added, *this Day have I begotten thee*. ACTS xiii. 33.

It was not till after his Resurrection that Christ publicly acknowledged himself to be the Messiah, and this afforded the most incontestible proof of his right to that divine authority which he assumed, at the same time that it put him in full possession of it; for thus the Apostle PAUL tells us, that

it is thus used with regard to the Priests which Jeroboam constituted and appointed to that office, *whosoever would, be consecrated*, ὁ βυλομενος ἐπληρε του λειρα αυτα, *him, and he became one of the Priests of the High Places*. 1 KINGS xiii. 33. And in several other places it has the same meaning.

that *Christ was declared to be the Son of God with Power, (or endowed with full Power,) by his Resurrection from the dead.* ROMANS i. 4. and therefore he is called *the first born, and the first begotten of the dead.* COLOSS. i. 18. REVEL. i. 5. So that as the sufferings and death of our great High Priest was the finishing part of his Consecration to the Messiahship, when he was solemnly acknowledged and proved to be *the Son of God*, I think it is evident, that as he was also declared by God to be *his beloved Son* at his Baptism, that this must be the initial part of his Dedication to his office, and consequently that his Baptism was intended by way of Consecration.

I cannot excuse myself from observing, before I conclude this inquiry into the design of the Baptism of our blessed Lord, that there seems to be an exact and regular conformity between the Consecration of Christ and that of the High Priests under the Law of MOSES, in all the parts of it. We have an account of three different times when Christ was publickly declared from Heaven *to be the Son of God*; the first of these was at his Baptism, the second at his Transfiguration, and the third at his Resurrection from the dead; at his Baptism he was washed with Water, and anointed with the holy Ghost, which bears a very clear resemblance to the washing of the Priests at the beginning of their Consecration, and their subsequent anointing with Oil: after their Baptism they were invested with the *holy garments*, peculiarly appointed *for Glory and for Beauty.* EXOD. xxviii. 2. i. e. “to distinguish and adorn them in the performance of their service”; agreeably to which our blessed Lord, at his Transfiguration, *received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came a Voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved*



*beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* 2 PETER i. 17. and the glory of his appearance at that time was so great, that the disciples who were with him fell on their faces by reason of its resplendent brightness; for we are told, that *his Face did shine as the Sun, and his Raiment was white as the Light.* MATTHEW xvii. 2.

This then was a solemn investiture of our Lord to his office, with robes of glory, resembling the Shechinah, by which the divine Presence was exhibited under the Mosaick Dispensation; and in these bright and holy garments *our High Priest is now entered into the holy Place, into Heaven itself, there to appear in the Presence of God for us*: this may justly be concluded from the Vision which St. JOHN had of him after his Ascension into Heaven; when he appeared clothed nearly in the same manner as he was at his Transfiguration on the Mount, *for his Head, and his Hairs were white like Wooll, as white as Snow; and his Eyes were as a flame of Fire; and his Feet like unto fine Brass, as if they burned in a Furnace; and his Countenance was as the Sun shining in its strength.* Rev. i. 14, 15, 16.

The Consecration of the Messiah being thus far carried on, with an exact agreement to that of the Levitical High Priest, the only thing that remained to compleat it, was the offering of a Sacrifice of Consecration; this, as I have already shewn, was done by the Sacrifice of himself, by which, as he himself declares, *it was finished, τετελεσται.* JOHN xix. 30. and after his Resurrection he solemnly lays claim to that authority with which he was endowed, by asserting, that *all Power in Heaven, and in Earth, was given unto him.* This conformity however was not so exact, but that there was a manifest preference given to Christ in every branch

branch of his Dedication ; for as he obtained a more excellent Ministry than the legal High Priests, so the manner of his appointment to it had circumstances attending it which manifested a distinguishing superiority to them.

AARON had the Baptism of his Consecration administered by MOSES, a great Prophet ; Jesus was baptized by JOHN the Baptist, of whom it is said by him, *that he was more than a Prophet, and that among them that are born of Women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.* MATTHEW xi. 9, 11. AARON was anointed with Oil compounded with spices, Christ was anointed with the holy Ghost ; the garments with which AARON was invested, however rich and beautiful, were yet material ones, our blessed Lord was invested with robes of light and glory ; MOSES alone was employed in putting on the holy garments upon AARON, but both MOSES the giver of the Law, and ELIAS the Harbinger of the Gospel, were present at the solemn investiture of the Messiah ; the Sacrifice which was offered for the Consecration of AARON was only that of a Ram, the Consecration of our great High Priest was perfected by the Sacrifice of himself ; a Being incomparably greater, not only than any of the animal, but even than any of the human or angelick order of beings ; and a Sacrifice which not only answered the end of consecrating him to his Priesthood, but in which all the intentions of sacrifices of whatever nature and kind were united, and which it accomplished in a vastly more perfect and efficacious manner. So that upon the whole I think there is incontestable evidence, that the Baptism of Christ was intended to consecrate him to the office of Messiah.

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I have been the more careful as well as diffuse in making this inquiry into the nature of the Baptism with which Christ was baptized, and its difference from that with which JOHN baptized his followers, partly upon account of its being a subject very little treated of, at least in a satisfactory manner; but I had also a further view in making this disquisition with exactness, which was, that I imagined it would open a way for the discovery of the design of that Baptism which Christ instituted for all his disciples; for I cannot but think it highly probable, that the same kind of Baptism with which he himself was baptized was also appointed by him for the Baptism of his followers.

That the Baptism which our blessed Lord instituted was of a different nature from the Baptism of JOHN there is this indisputable proof, that the latter was not deemed sufficient to entitle those who were partakers of it to the profession and privileges of Christianity, but where this had been administered the other was thought necessary to be superadded; we have an instance of this which is very full and decisive with regard to the disciples whom St. PAUL found at Ephesus, who being informed by them that they had been only baptized with JOHN's Baptism, immediately tells them. *JOHN verily baptized with the Baptism of Repentance, saying unto the People, That they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus; and then it is added, When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* ACTS xix. 3, 4, 5 \*. Besides this there is the highest probability, that among the Three  
Thousand

\* I am sensible that it has been maintained by some, that the words in the fifth verse are not St. LUKE's but St. PAUL's, and are a continuation of his account of the Baptism of JOHN begun

Thousand who were baptized into Christ on the day of Pentecost, there were a great number who had before received Baptism from the hands of JOHN, for we are told, that those who were present at that time were *Jews and devout men dwelling at Jerusalem.* ACTS ii. 5. *Jews and Proselytes.* v. 10. The Apostle PETER directs his discourse to the *men of Israel.* v. 22. and he concludes it with a solemn application to them, *Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* v. 36.

Now of all the Jews none were more likely to gather together upon occasion of this descent of the holy Ghost upon the Apostles being noised abroad, than those who had been prepared for it by being baptized with JOHN's Baptism, at which time he had expressly foretold it to them. MATTHEW iii. 11. MARK i. 8. LUKE iii. 16. And if we consider the vast multitudes of Jews who were baptized by JOHN, insomuch that it is said, that *there went out to him all the Land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the River Jordan.* MARK i. 5. it can scarce be conceived possible, but that a great many of those who were at this time baptized by the Apostles had been before baptized with JOHN's Baptism; and certainly it would not have been repeated had not the Baptism of Christ been of a different nature from that of JOHN's.

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begun in the fourth verse; intending hereby to shew, that all who were baptized with JOHN's Baptism were virtually and in effect baptized into Christ; but this interpretation is so forced, and so inconsistent with the account which JOHN himself gives of his Baptism, as has been sufficiently shewn by those eminent Critics, GROTIUS, LIMBORCH, WHITEBY, &c. that I shall not spend any time in the confutation of it, but refer my Reader to the Notes of those learned Commentators.



What has been alledged here of the difference between the Baptism of JOHN and that of Christ, and of the insufficiency of the former to constitute men thoroughly his disciples, may perhaps be deemed to lie open to this objection. "That it does not appear from any of the Gospels, that the Apostles themselves had ever any other than the Baptism of JOHN, which, was it necessary, they certainly would have had, since if they were not baptized with true christian Baptism, they could not be in a capacity of administering it to others; and consequently all the Administrations of this Ordinance by them, as well as by those who have succeeded them, must be deemed invalid, should not the Baptism of JOHN be supposed to be of the nature of true christian Baptism."

Now to this I answer, that though no evidence could be produced from the Evangelick Writings, that the Apostles were actually baptized by Christ, yet this circumstance alone would not be sufficient to overthrow those arguments which have been adduced in proof of its distinction from JOHN's Baptism, inasmuch as it must be supposed, and may be clearly proved, that *many things which Jesus did are not written in those Books.* JOHN xx. 30. and this therefore may be omitted as well as others. But if I may be indulged to offer a Conjecture, it may perhaps render it not altogether improbable, that we have some account of their Baptism. The place upon which my Conjecture is founded, is that where we have a relation of Christ's washing the Apostles Feet. JOHN xiii. 4—14. and I was led to it by the observation of several circumstances in that History. The action was for the most part the same with that which was used in the Baptismal Consecration of the

Priests, from which I have endeavoured to prove christian Baptism to be derived; for it was a washing their Feet, their Hands probably being washed before Supper, and the time of administering this action, which appears to be just before the Institution of the Sacramental Supper, adds a sanction to this supposition, that it was a washing of Consecration, in conformity to that of the Priests being performed at their entrance upon the Temple Service; and several things said, during and consequent upon this transaction, yield yet further Probabilities of its being of a Sacramental Nature. It may be proper to consider a few of them.

When our Lord came to St. PETER, with an offer to wash his Feet, PETER stops him with this demand. *Lord, dost thou wash my Feet?* v. 6. *i. e.* as appears by the answer. ‘For what reason, and  
 ‘with what view, wilt thou demean thyself so far  
 ‘as to submit to this servile office of washing my  
 ‘Feet?’ To which our Saviour answers. *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* v. 7. *i. e.* ‘There is something more in  
 ‘this action than thou now apprehendest, or is  
 ‘proper for thee to know, but thou shalt shortly  
 ‘be acquainted with the meaning of it, and be  
 ‘sensible of its necessity?’ PETER not satisfied with this answer grows more resolute in his refusal, for *he saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my Feet.* v. 8. *i. e.* ‘Unless I can see some reason  
 ‘for this abasement of thyself, I will by no means  
 ‘permit it.’ Upon this our Lord, in his reply, vouchsafes to give him a distant though sufficiently intelligible intimation of the necessity of this action, and of his design herein. *If I wash thee not, says he, thou hast no part with me.* *i. e.* ‘If thou persist in rejecting the performance of  
 ‘this

' this office, it will be so greatly to thine own de-  
 ' triment, that thou wilt have no title to the cha-  
 ' racter of my disciple, nor any share in pro-  
 ' moting and establishing that spiritual Kingdom  
 ' which I am about to set up.' PETER being  
 now thoroughly convinced of its necessity, cries  
 out with an affectionate warmth. *Lord, not my*  
*Feet only, but also my Hands and my Head.* v. 9:  
*i. e.* ' I am content, Lord, if this be the case,  
 ' not only to have my Feet washed, but also my  
 ' Hands and my Head, and my whole Body if  
 ' necessary.' To which our Lord makes this  
 answer, *He that is washed, needeth not save to wash*  
*his Feet, but is clean every whit.* v. 10. *i. e.* ' The  
 ' separation of you, denoted and made by this  
 ' service, requires no more to be done than a  
 ' washing so small a part of the Body as the Feet,  
 ' by which alone it is sufficiently perfected.'

Our blessed Saviour having compleated this  
 office, and being again sat down to Table, pro-  
 ceeds to give his Apostles some further informa-  
 tion of the nature and design of it, for he says  
 unto them—*Know ye what I have done to you? Ye*  
*call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I*  
*am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed*  
*your Feet, ye ought also to wash one another's Feet.*  
*For I have given you an example, that ye should do*  
*as I have done to you.* v. 12—15. *i. e.* ' In order  
 ' that you may have some further knowledge of  
 ' the service I have been performing, you need  
 ' only recollect your frequent acknowledgments  
 ' of me as your Ruler and Lawgiver, by which  
 ' you have very justly professed your subjection  
 ' to me as my servants and followers; now the  
 ' action in which I have been employed is a so-  
 ' lemn confirmation of this my title, and I have  
 ' hereby separated and devoted you in a sacra-  
 ' mental

‘ mental way to my service ; and I have not done  
 ‘ this merely for your own sakes, but that you  
 ‘ might learn hereby how to perform the same  
 ‘ office to others of my disciples, who shall here-  
 ‘ after be found ready to make the same acknow-  
 ‘ ledgments, and devote themselves in like man-  
 ‘ ner to my service.’

I am not sensible that the representation I have here given of our blessed Lord’s declaration is in the least forced or unnatural ; for though it must be owned there is no determinate designation of the Baptismal Ordinance contained in them, it being necessary that the full institution of it should be deferred till after the Resurrection of Christ, as is here intimated, v. 7. yet they contain such descriptions as are used in distinguishing that Ordinance, and such as prove this service to be of a similar kind with that ; for it is here declared necessary to constitute the Apostles Christ’s disciples and ministers ; the design of it is shewn to be a separation to his service, and it is proposed as a pattern of somewhat they were afterwards to perform to others, who should enlist themselves under his banner ; which things I apprehend afford a good ground of probability to the Conjecture I have made ; whether it be any thing more than such must be left to the determination of my Reader.

Since the Baptism of Christ then was instituted for different purposes from that of JOHN’s, as there are but two intentions to be found for which Baptism was ever used, *viz.* for Repentance and Purification, or for Initiation and Consecration ; and as the Baptism of JOHN has been plainly proved to be of the former kind, it evidently follows that christian Baptism must be of the latter, even the very same sort of Baptism with which our blessed Lord,



Lord, who is called our Head, our Elder Brother, our Forerunner, was baptized, which, as I have shewn, was a Baptism of Consecration.

Solemn and formal methods of admitting and setting apart persons to special offices and characters have been made use of in all ages of the world; the Heathens had their initiatory Rites for entering their Devotees into a participation of their religious Mysteries; and we are informed by TERTULLIAN (de Baptismo. Ch. 5.) that in some Cases, particularly in the Mysteries of APOLLO and CERES, they made use of this very Rite of Baptism for the purpose of Regeneration or Admission into their Superstitions; which custom he supposes them to have borrowed from the Jews; and to have herein imitated the things of God; from whence it is plain, that Baptism for Initiation was in use both among Jews and Gentiles, before the coming of Christ, and was probably pitched upon by him because it was an Institution, the meaning of which was easy to be understood by all to whom the Gospel was to be preached; for as Baptism was submitted to by himself, in conformity to the Baptismal Consecration of the Levitical High Priest, so there is the highest probability that the Baptism of his disciples, who are *Partakers of the same holy Priesthood*, was intended to consecrate them to that service.

This will receive further confirmation if it be considered, that the very same words by which the Baptismal Consecration of the Jewish High Priests, and that of the Messiah is described, are also applied to baptized Christians, for they are called the *sanctified*, *αγιασμένοι*. I COR. i. 2. HEBREWS ii. 11. And this sanctification is in other places attributed to Baptism. I COR. vi. 11. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are just-*

*fed in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.* Its being here joined with washing, or Baptism, manifestly shews that it has a relation to it; but elsewhere sanctification is directly declared to be the design and effect of Baptism: *EPH. v. 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it; i. e. the Church or collective Body of Christ's disciples, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. v. 27.* The way then by which Christ constitutes his Church, and admits persons to become members of it is Baptism, and hence the *Church of Christ, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, the saints, and the called to be saints,* are equivalent expressions; as may be seen by consulting the beginning of several of St. PAUL's Epistles. Christians are also called the *Sons of God.* JOHN i. 12. I EPIS. iii. 1. And as Christ, who is *the first-born among many Brethren,* received this appellation at his Baptism, so it seems to be applied to his followers upon the same account. GAL. iii. 26, 27. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.* And for this reason they are said to be *born of God.* JOHN i. 13. I EPIS. v. 1. because they were *born of water* at their Baptism. JOHN iii. 5. this being the initial part or birth of that new life to which they were begotten by their embracing of Christianity \*. Not only are the disciples of Christ distinguished by the same titles with their great Master,

\* It cannot, I hope, be thought impertinent to observe here, that this title of *Sons of God* is attributed to christians upon other accounts besides their Baptism, as it was to our blessed Saviour with regard to the several parts of his Consecration;

Master, but they are also distinguished with characters and offices alike noble and important. Our blessed Lord was by his Baptism consecrated to the Messiahship, to be a Prophet, Priest, and King to his Church; and the same dignities we are also assured are conferred on all his sincere followers, for they are all *made Kings and Priests unto*

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God.

secration; thus the holy Spirit, which was poured out upon christians, is called *the Spirit of Adoption*. ROMANS viii. 15. and this Spirit is said to *bear witness that we are the children of God*. v. 16. just as it did with regard to our blessed Saviour at his Baptism: and *in order* (οτι here signifies *that*, as it also does in most places of the New Testament) to declare or constitute us Sons, God is said to have *sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts*. GAL. iv. 6. For this reason christians are said to be *anointed*, by having *the earnest of the Spirit given them in their hearts*. 2 COR. i. 21, 22. and to have *received the anointing*. 1 JOHN ii. 27. and to have *an unction from the holy one*. v. 20. which are manifest allusions to our blessed Lord's being anointed with the holy Ghost after his Baptism. In like manner when christians are well established in the ways of holiness by a conformity to Christ, and following the directions and guidance of his Spirit, they have a renewal of this character of Sons conferred upon them, for *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*. ROMANS viii. 14. And therefore in allusion to our Saviour's being clothed with light and glory at his Transfiguration, they are said to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*. ROMANS xiii. 14. GAL. iii. 27. *To put on the new man*. EPH. iv. 24. COL. iii. 10. And this *Righteousness* with which the Saints are said to be *clothed and arrayed*. JOB xxix. 14. REV. xix. 8. is represented as a mark and proof of their being the *Sons of God*, *Ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him*. 1 JOHN ii. 29. The concluding part of Christ's Consecration, when he was declared to be the Son of God with Power by his Resurrection from the dead, is also applied to his followers, and they are called the *Sons of God* upon the same account; our Lord himself expressly tells us that they are the *children of God, being children of the Resurrection*. LUKE xx. 36. And the *Redemption of the Body from the Grave* is styled *the Adoption*. ROMANS viii. 23. And the same Resurrection is said to be the *Manifestation of the Sons of God*. v. 19. in the same manner as that of our Saviour declared him *to be the Son of God*. ROMANS i. 4.

*God. REV. i. 6. and they are stiled a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People. I PETER ii. 9. and verse 5. an holy Priesthood to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* So that I apprehend nothing is wanting, upon the whole, to prove that the Baptism which is truly and properly christian, is different from that of JOHN the Baptist, and the same as that with which Christ was baptized, and that it is intended for no other purpose than that of Initiation and Consecration.

I have only further to observe, that as the Baptism of JOHN was different from that which Christ instituted, so it is evidently intended by way of preparation for it; the Baptism of JOHN was a Baptism of Repentance and Renunciation, that of Christ was a Baptism of Initiation and Consecration; by the former their abandoning their old errors, prejudices, and sins was declared, by the latter their embracing the truth and holiness of the Gospel; by one they renounced the Devil and the world with their lusts and vanities, by the other they were devoted and dedicated to the service of God and the obedience of Christ; so that one was plainly introductory to the other, it being necessary that they should first forsake a false and corrupt Profession before they could take upon them one that was perfectly true and holy: and this JOHN himself declares to be the end and intent of his Baptism, for upon the demand which the Priests and Levites made, *Who art thou? And why baptizest thou? What sayest thou of thyself? That we may give an answer to them that sent us.* He tells them, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, as said the Prophet Esaias, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight; every Vally shall be filled, and every Moun-*  
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*tain and Hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; to this end, that all Flesh might see the Salvation of God.* LUKE iii. 4, 5, 6. compared with JOHN i. 22, 23, 25. MATTHEW iii. 2. and MARK i. 3.

These are figurative expressions, and the meaning of them is plainly this — “ The design of my “ Preaching and Baptism is to form my followers “ to such a temper of mind as may dispose “ them readily to apprehend and entertain the “ Revelation of the Messiah, who is shortly to “ appear; and in order to this they must divest “ themselves of such corrupt passions, prejudices, “ and sins which would be obstacles in the way “ to their reception of it. *Casting down, to use the “ words of the Apostle, Imaginations, and every “ high thing that exaleth itself against the knowledge “ of God, and bringing into captivity every thought “ to the obedience of Christ.* 2 COR. x. 5. The occasion of JOHN’s preaching Repentance, he tells us, was because the *kingdom of heaven was at hand*, MATTHEW iii. 2. and the Baptism of Repentance which he administered was intended for the *Remission of Sins*. MARK i. 4. for taking away that disorder and corruption of mind which would hinder them from inbracing the pure and holy doctrines of the Gospel of Christ \*. So that the whole ministry of JOHN was preparatory to the Gospel dispensation, and his Baptism an introduction to, as well as different from, the Baptism of our blessed Saviour.

But though the design of JOHN’s Baptism, and that of Christ are so widely different, yet there is  
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\* Many Texts might be produced, wherein the *forgiveness of Sins* signifies no more than the removal of bodily or mental diseases.

good reason to think, that they were united and conjoined in some of the first Baptisms which were administered by the Apostles after the ascension of Christ; thus we find St. PETER having convinced a great multitude of Jews and Profelytes, *that Jesus was the Christ*, directs them, in consequence of this conviction, to *repent, and be baptized every one of them, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.* ACTS ii. 38. And we have an account in the 41st verse, that about Three Thousand of them were baptized; here it is evident, that these converts were baptized with christian Baptism, for they were baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ, and many of them were also at the same time baptized with the Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, which was the Baptism of JOHN; and the reason of these two different kinds of Baptisms being here united, is, I think, plainly this, a great number of these disciples were strongly prejudiced against the person and character of our blessed Saviour, whom they expected to make a quite different appearance, if he was really the Messiah, than that of a despised, ignominious and crucified person: nay, to add to their guilt the Apostle tells them, that they were accessory to the death of the innocent and holy Jesus; *Him, says he, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* v. 23. And he concludes his discourse with an appeal to the whole nation of the Jews in justification of this charge against them. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* v. 36.

It is very plain, that this accusation of St. PETER smote their consciences, and thoroughly convinced them of the heinousness of their crime,  
for

for we are told in the very next words, that *when they heard this they were pricked in the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Such a detestable sin as this, if they had been guilty of no other, could not but require a particular repentance before they could be admitted to be the disciples and followers of that Saviour whom they had crucified and slain; and, accordingly, we find, that the Apostle immediately exhorts them to repentance, as a qualification for Baptism, and admission into the church of Christ; and promises the remission of sin, and the gift of the holy Ghost, as a consequence of it. v. 38. So that the demand of repentance, and the promise of forgiveness, are a clear proof that this Baptism was of the same nature with that of JOHN's; and their being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and receiving the gift of the holy Ghost, are an equal demonstration that their Baptism was also truly and properly christian.

But though repentance is here expressly required as a necessary preparation for Baptism, there is no mention made of it with regard to others who were baptized by the Apostles; for in the instance of PHILIP's baptizing the people of Samaria, all that was demanded of them was their *believing*. ACTS viii. 12. And when the Eunuch made known his desire of being baptized to PHILIP, he tells him, *if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest*. v. 36, 37. In like manner when the Jailer demanded of PAUL and SILAS, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* He answers, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*. ACTS xvi. 30, 31.

Other instances might be brought of persons, where there is no express mention made of repentance

pentance as a qualification for it ; and the most probable reason of this seems to be, that there was no appearance in those persons of any prejudices against Christ and his religion, and that they indulged themselves in no vicious practices, which might be an obstacle to their reception of it, or hinder its efficacy upon them ; and as far as this was the case with them, they were in the same state with those who had removed those obstacles by a particular repentance : but then it is plain the Apostles reckoned the number of those men to be very small, because they make repentance a principal subject of their Sermons and Discourses, both to Jews and Gentiles, and inforce it as necessary to their embracing Christianity ; thus St. PAUL tells the Athenians, that, *now*, especially at the opening of the Gospel-dispensation, *God commandeth all men every where to repent.* ACTS xvii. 30.

He informs us, that it was his constant practice, wherever he preached, to inculcate this doctrine ; that he *taught them both publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, as well as faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* ACTS xx. 20, 21. And in his vindication of himself before King AGRIPPA, he acknowledges, that *he shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and do works meet for repentance.* ACTS xxvi. 20. So that the Apostles seemed to think repentance necessary for all persons to whom they preached, in order to their admission into the kingdom and church of Christ, for this reason, because having been under the influence of religious principles, more or less corrupt, and addicted themselves to practices more  
or



or less vicious, it was highly proper that these should be renounced before they could be in a proper disposition to entertain the pure and spiritual institutions of the Gospel: where this was apparently the character of the persons to be baptized, there a particular repentance and renunciation seems to have been demanded, but in other cases, where there appeared to be an upright and unprejudiced heart, it was not insisted upon, neither was it necessary, because it was only into this state that repentance was intended to bring them. Such just persons, therefore, who upon account of their being free from gross errors and sins need no repentance, need not to be baptized with the Baptism of JOHN, which was a Baptism of repentance, neither indeed are they capable of it.

And this I apprehend to be the very case of Infants, they cannot possibly have any prejudices in their minds against Christianity, and they have acquired no vicious habits which might obstruct its influence upon them; their hearts are open to instruction and discipline, and their intellectual endowments capable of being moulded and formed by the power of education and divine influence for the reception of those truths and directions which are inculcated upon them; so that as they have nothing in them which may be an hindrance to their entertainment of the Gospel, or to its efficacy upon them, they cannot be capable of that Baptism of repentance which was intended for the removal of those obstacles: but the same qualities which render the Baptism of JOHN unnecessary and unfit for Infants, do also put them in a capacity for receiving that Baptism which is truly and properly christian; for if they are free from the prejudices of error and  
vice,

vice, and are well disposed for the reception of the principles and rules of Christianity, as soon as they can be made acquainted with them, what should hinder their being initiated into it by Baptism, since they are in the same state, and have the same dispositions of soul with those for whom christian Baptism was intended, and to whom it was constantly and readily administered ? The dictates of sound reason declare strongly both for their right to this privilege, and their qualifications for it.

Communities of all kinds, as well religious as civil, have admitted Children to the same privileges with their Parents, as far as they were capable of them. That government would be most tyrannical and cruel, which would exclude the inoffensive offspring of its subjects from the protection and advantages which all its other subjects enjoy from it ; that Parent would be most unnatural and barbarous, who would deny his helpless Children that food and raiment, that defence and tuition which is necessary for them, and which he is capable of affording them ; and far be it from any to ascribe that to the King of Kings, the most tender and bountiful Parent of the Universe, which would be looked upon as an injurious charge against any of the human race who have not extinguished every spark of humanity.

Infants are possessed of these privileges by birthright, they have a natural and unalienable title to them ; they are born Children, and are born subjects, and they cannot justly be divested of the rights of those relations, without a wilful forfeiture of them ; but they are not only born subjects of the kingdoms of this world, and Children of earthly Parents, but by their birth they become subjects and servants of the great Sovereign

vereign of the world, and Children of the living and most High God, who is the common *Father of us all*; they, as well as their Parents, are *his offspring*, he is the former of their bodies, and the father of their spirits, and upon this account they are *the Sons and Daughters of the Almighty*; and if they are the Children, then they are the *Heirs of God*, and as such are intitled, not only to the protection and supplies of his Providence, as he is the maker of their bodies, but have also a claim to the directions and assistances of his Grace, as he is the father of their spirits; for if earthly Parents are ready to give not only temporal but spiritual good things, according to their own ability, and their Childrens necessity, how much more shall their heavenly Father bestow on them all things necessary to their eternal, as well as their present happiness?

The mercies of God's Providence vouchsafed to Infants are visible and indisputable, and can we think that he will take less care of their precious and immortal souls than of their frail and mortal bodies? *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*; his bounties are suited to the wants of all his creatures; *Behold the Fowls of the Air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns! Yet our heavenly Father feedeth them*; and are not the meanest of the human race *much better than they*? Have they not a fairer claim to the divine protection and bounty? And in proportion as Infants are less able to help and provide for themselves, and are possessed of greater innocence and integrity of mind than any other of the children of men, must not the mercies of their infinitely great and good Parent be supposed to be proportionably more extensive and liberal to them? Of all the human species therefore their  
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infant helpless offspring stand fairest for distinguishing tokens of the divine regard, and surely then God will not exclude them from any of those privileges which their Parents enjoy, if they are capable of them. Do we find that they are denied any of the necessities of an animal life; if they are not, why should they be denied any thing conducive to their spiritual and divine life? It is true, the providential mercies of God are conveyed to Infants by the instrumentality of their Parents and Friends, and what should hinder their being made partakers of spiritual mercies and blessings by the like instruments? By what means forever any privileges and bounties are bestowed, they all proceed from God, *every good gift*, of whatever kind it is, *comes from him*, though it may be, and perhaps is always, conveyed by the influence and agency of some other Being; and whatever Beings are employed in carrying on the kind designs of God, whether they are those of his Providence or Grace, I can see no reason why they should be restrained from performing their benevolent offices to such helpless creatures as stand in most need of them.

The same instruments therefore who are intrusted with communications of blessings to the Parent, may equally be intrusted with the communication of like blessings to the Child; God makes no difference in his treatment of them, *all Souls are his, as the Soul of the Father, so also the Soul of the Child is his.* EZEK. xviii. 4. And if God be not at all partial to them, why should we suppose it of those wise and holy agents whom he employs in carrying on his work? He is *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, without any distinction, and what should oppose his *pouring out his Spirit upon all flesh* in common, not upon the Parents only, but also  
upon



upon their Offspring? It must be owned there is a great diversity in the divine gifts, neither is God under any obligation to confer the same privileges on every part of the human race; and also, that Parents are usually invested with a superiority both of authority and advantages above their Children; but these are either the gifts of nature, and arise from the relation in which they stand as under God, the authors of their beings, or they proceed from a careful improvement of those common privileges, in which their Children are joint partakers with them; and in this case their superior advantages cannot fall under the notion of privileges, but rather of rewards, according to the determination of our blessed Saviour. MATTHEW xiii. 12. *For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.*

Privileges are the effects of meer grace and good will, and are bestowed as means to obtain and dispose for the rewards of happiness; and where the happiness proposed is the same, there it is reasonable to suppose the same means of acquiring it will be afforded: whatever advantages therefore are given, previous to any improvement, must be common mercies, and be distributed in a general and comprehensive manner amongst all who are capable subjects of them; and if any privileges are common and general, surely Baptism, which is the primary and initial one, must be so; we may therefore justly conclude, that all those who are called *to one and the same Hope*, are subjected *to one and the same Lord*, and belong *to the same household of Faith*, are intitled to one and the same Baptism, by him who is *one and the same God, and Father of all*. EPHES. iv. 4, 5, 6.

Baptism then being allowed by all to be a privilege, and proved to be a privilege belonging

to all who are properly disposed for it, nothing can exclude Infants from a participation of it, but their own incapacity and indisposition; and the same argument which I have insisted upon, of God being their Father, will also afford sufficient proof that he has not created them under any inability of receiving those gracious communications which are of the utmost importance to them, and even necessary to the participation of that sublime happiness for which he designs them.

The race of mankind are evidently intended by God for intellectual and moral exercises, for religious and divine employments, and surely he has not formed them with any disabilities for partaking of those privileges which are every way conducive to the promoting these great and noble purposes. If we examine into God's dealings with other creatures of a lower rank, it may give us a strong presumptive evidence, in what manner he may be supposed to have formed those Beings whom he has set at the head of his lower creation. Do we not see that all the animal race are endowed with an instinctive or discerning faculty, with regard to such things as are necessary and useful to the preservation and furtherance of their animal life? Even from the very hour in which they are released from their embryo state, they need no directions to lead them to the dug, or that kind of food which is proper for them; they have the use of their animal senses from their birth, and as soon as that which is intended for the gratification of them is offered them, they readily take, and easily digest it, for their nourishment and growth; and can it be imagined that the capacities of intelligent and moral agents, for improvement in the rational and divine life in their Infant State, are less extensive and efficacious in their kind

kind than brutal faculties and endowments are ? The intent of God, in creating a world of rational creatures, could be no other than promoting his own honour and their happiness, and it would be a manifest counter-acting of his own design, a conduct perfectly unworthy of a wise Being, to form them with disabilities for those great purposes for which they are intended.

All the arguments that can possibly be urged upon this head must terminate in this conclusion, that man is created with moral and religious capacities, or he is not created a moral and religious agent; but that men are moral and religious agents their own experience and feeling is sufficient proof, and a little observation will convince us, that this intellectual light has an early dawning in the minds of Infants, and discovers the beginnings of a moral and religious sense of things betimes in their hearts : it cannot fail of having been taken notice of by many, that young Children, before they have arrived to the use of speech themselves, or have been capable of understanding its meaning when used by others, have yet had an awful sense of a superior Being impressed upon their minds, and a distinguishing apprehension of good and evil, right and wrong, evidencing itself in their actions.

It is remarkable that these internal notices of things manifest themselves in Infants in the very same manner as they do in grown persons, who have been deaf and dumb from their birth ; so that as no time of their life can be supposed wherein children are destitute of the faculty of Reason, neither can there be any great length of time assigned wherein they have not some use and exercise of it, so far at least, as to make them capable of receiving religious and moral instructions, as

well as such as are civil and natural; and consequently that there is a very short space of life in which they are not ripe for initiation into these moral and religious principles, which, as I have already shewn, is the great intent of christian Baptism.

Thus far I have pleaded the cause of Infants, and their right to religious Institution, by arguments derived from the consideration of the end and design of christian Baptism; and herein I have employed Reason alone as their advocate; Reason which argues equally strong in support of the religious, as of the civil rights and privileges to which they are born; for it must appear absolutely unreasonable and unjust to exclude them from that birthright in their spiritual and everlasting concerns, which the judgment of all wise and civilized nations allows them in those that are temporal and civil. But though these arguments may be heard with full conviction by the ear of humanity and parental tenderness, they are not the only arguments by which their cause is to be vindicated, for I am fully persuaded, that not only the voice of Reason and Humanity plead with unanswerable force in their behalf, but that even Divinity itself hath espoused their interests, by evidently asserting their right to this Ordinance; and this is what I hope to make appear under the subsequent Propositions.



## PROPOSITION II.

Baptism is a Qualification necessary for all christians, in order to their becoming members of the Church of Christ, and to their obtaining a right to the priviledges and blessings of the Gospel Covenant.

This Proposition is a direct and plain deduction from the foregoing; for as Baptism was there shewn to be the initiating Ordinance of Christianity, and its design to be that of entering persons into the Kingdom and Church of Christ, so as thereby to become members of it, and intitled to its priviledges, it is an evident consequence, that none can be such who are not admitted by this Rite; this is the Door of Christianity, and he who enters not in by this, can have no other than a surreptitious claim to the christian Name, and the priviledges and advantages of the Gospel Dispensation. There is a manifest absurdity in supposing a person to be invested with any character or office without such character or office having a begining; and it can have no other begining than that which is appropriated to its solemn investiture and admission; this, in the case before us, has been made to appear to be no other than Baptism into the Name and Profession of Christ and his Religion, which must therefore be indispensably necessary to all who would become his disciples, and be made partakers of his blessings.

Whatever advantages we have by Christ, we can expect only to have them in the way of his own appointment; and the way which our Lord himself has appointed to put us in a condition to re-

ceive the privileges of the Gospel Covenant is, that of being admitted by the Baptismal Ordinance; the words of Christ's Commission are a strong proof of this, *Disciple all nations, Baptizing them.* The christian oeconomy is the school of Christ, and the ceremony which he has ordained for the entrance and matriculation of scholars into his school is their Baptism, none therefore can be his true and regular disciples, unless they are introduced by this Rite, hereby they are devoted to his guidance and tuition, and are subjected to his direction and government, they become his subjects and servants, are enlisted into his service, inrolled under his banner, and bound to a submission to his discipline; and there can be no pretence to a title to Christ's gracious protection and instruction, without a compliance with the method which he has appointed for initiating and entering his followers into the possession of those privileges; the relations in which we stand to Christ, the duties we owe him, and the benefits we receive by him, have their primary and initial foundation in this Ordinance, and by consequence it must be necessary for all christians.

I am sensible that there is a difficulty which has been frequently urged against the extensiveness of the Baptismal Ordinance, which has the appearance of considerable weight in it. It is alledged, that Baptism was intended for proselyting persons from other Religions to the embracement and profession of Christianity. It was used with this intent, and upon this footing, by the Jews; when any of the heathen nations declared their resolution of forsaking the idolatries and superstitions in which they had lived, and their desire to embrace the Jewish religion and worship, they were separated and introduced by a Baptismal washing with  
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water; thus it seems to have been practised by MOSES, when he washed all the people of Israel from the idolatrous pollutions they had contracted in the land of Egypt, by the miraculous Baptism of the Red Sea; and there is very clear evidence, that the same practice was continued and preserved in the Jewish nation at the time of our blessed Saviour's appearance.

Now it has been generally thought, that when Christ gave the Commission to the Apostles, to go and proselyte all nations to him by Baptizing them, he took this Jewish Baptism of Proselytes for his pattern, and ordered his own Institution in an exact conformity to their practice; so that the warrant for christian Baptism could have no larger extent, or take in any more subjects, than the custom from whence it was derived, unless some particular direction had been given how far they might deviate from it. But the same authorities which make us acquainted with this Jewish Rite, give us also an account of the restriction with which it was used, asserting in the plainest and fullest manner, that it was only administered to those who were immediate proselytes from other Religions, and was not thought necessary for those who descended from them, but that the offspring of baptized persons were always reckoned as baptized by the Baptism of their Forefathers; and we find accordingly, that though the whole people of Israel were baptized by MOSES, their progeny were not afterwards obliged to an observance of that Institution; and in after-ages, whenever any were purified from the defilements of heathenish idolatry and superstition by this Rite, it was discontinued to be administered to those who were born of them after they became Jews; and their descendants, in all succeeding generations, were esteemed an

*holy Seed*, in the same manner and extent as those who were born originally of Jewish extraction; so that whenever *the Root was holy, the Branches were also accounted holy.* ROMANS XI. 16.

And not only the religious customs of the Jewish state, but the civil institutions of all regular Governments and Communities seem to countenance the admission of members into their respective societies with the same restrictions; for at the same time any person is naturalized, and incorporated into any State, all his descendants, at whatever distance, are supposed to be naturalized and enfranchised by the same Act; they are free-born, and are possessed by their birthright of the privileges and immunities of that Community of which they are born subjects; and why should it not be the same in the Kingdom and Church of Christ, who, as the kind and indulgent Saviour and Redeemer of the world, cannot be supposed to lay any unnecessary burthens and restrictions upon his followers? And as there are no directions given in the New Testament, wherein they were to deviate from the common and established custom, how could the Apostles and first christians be supposed to apply this Ordinance to subjects quite different from those to whom they knew it was wont to be administered, without any warrant to that purpose? And if they had no authority to make a variation, none of their successors can have the least claim to alter the original practice, but should continue to use it in the same manner and extent as it was introduced by our blessed Saviour; especially as the great Apostle St. PAUL seems to have given plain intimations, that the same Constitution was to continue under the Gospel Dispensation which had prevailed under the Jewish, for he tells us expressly,



preſſly, that the holineſs which is the effect of Baptiſm, is not only conveyed to the children and after-ſcendants of a Believer, but even to his partner in wedlock, ſo that they are holy by virtue of that holineſs which he had been made partaker of, *for the unbelieving Husband is ſanctified by the Wife, and the unbelieving Wife is ſanctified by the Husband, elſe were your Children unclean, but now are they holy.*  
 1 CORIN. vii. 14.

Upon the whole therefore it may appear to be a juſt and reaſonable concluſion, that as the deſcendants of Jewiſh Proſelytes were accounted an *holy ſeed* without Baptiſm, and the offſpring of naturalized ſubjects have been no where thought to be obliged to a freſh act of naturalization, neither ſhould the deſcendants of Baptized chriſtians be under any neceſſity of being admitted into the Church of Chriſt by a Baptiſmal waſhing; eſpecially as our Lord has given no direction about the altering its uſual method of adminiſtration, and the Apoſtle PAUL ſeems to ſpeak in confirmation of it.

This is the Objection, which I have repreſented in its full force; but whatever formidable appearance it may be thought to make, I am perſwaded that a cloſe and impartial conſideration of what has been alledged under the former Propoſition, concerning the different intentions of Baptiſm, will diſarm it of all its ſtrength.

Baptiſm was there ſhewn to be made uſe of among the Jews for theſe two different purpoſes, that of Purification, and that of Initiation or Conſecration; the former of theſe was the Baptiſm of JOHN, not a meer ritual waſhing from legal uncleanness, but a purification from religious corruptions and imperfections, a Baptiſm of Proſelytiſm from the Jewiſh Law, in order to their im-

embracing that which Christ was about to establish; this is what he declares of himself, *I am the Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make his Paths straight.* JOHN i. 23. MATTHEW iii. 3. and the substance of his preaching was, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* ver. 2. These and other texts make it plain, that the Mission and Baptism of JOHN was only preparatory to that of the Messiah, it was a Baptism of repentance for their former sins, and renunciation of their former errors, without any the least pretence of initiating his disciples into any new profession; and this was the very same proselyte Baptism which had been used by the Jews in proselyting Heathens from their idolatry and wickedness; it was plainly derived from their practice, and administered with the same intent; for if the accounts we have of the Jewish Proselytes be duly considered, it will be very evident, that when they were baptized it was only for the renunciation of their heathenish impieties, and that they were not admitted and initiated into the Jewish Church thereby.

All that are acquainted with the history and antiquities of that nation know, that there were two sorts of Proselytes amongst them, distinguished by the titles of *Proselytes of the Gate*, and *Proselytes of Righteousness*; the former sort were not admitted as members of the Jewish church and religion, all that was required of them was, to renounce their idolatrous worship and impieties, and to yield an obedience to the moral law, as far as it was contained in those that were called the Seven Precepts of NOAH; they were as yet accounted to be only in a state of nature, bound to the same duties to which those of all nations were obliged by the law of Reason, but not to any of those positive  
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ones which God had enjoined to the Jews as his people by a revelation from Heaven ; and accordingly they were not permitted to join with the Jews in their religious services, or temple worship, and were not allowed to approach any nearer to it than the outer court, called, for that reason, *the Court of the Gentiles*.

The other sort of Profelytes, called *Profelytes of Righteousness*, or, as the Jews themselves stiled them, *Profelytes of the Covenant*, were entered into that state by Circumcision, and they were by that obliged to an observance of the whole law of MOSES, and intitled to all the priviledges peculiar to that dispensation ; so that the circumcised person was esteemed to be *a Debtor to do the whole Law*. GALAT. v. 3. and every one that was uncircumcised was *cut off*, or excluded from being of the number of the people of God. GENESIS xvii. 14. For this reason Circumcision is called the *Covenant*, or the token of the Covenant betwixt God and them. ver. 10, 11. it being absolutely necessary thereto by the divine appointment. This therefore was plainly the initiating Ordinance into the Jewish Religion, that of Baptism was only subservient thereto, it was declarative of their purgation from their heathenish impurities, and reduced its subjects merely into that state in which they would have been born had they been the offspring of Jewish Parents.

The Baptism of Profelytism cannot then be the Baptism of Christ, for this, as I have shewn, was a Baptism of Initiation, and answers directly to the Circumcision of the Jews, and is therefore called *the Circumcision of Christ*. COLOSS. ii. 11, 12. it being intended to enter persons into the Church of Christ, as Circumcision was appointed to admit them into the Jewish Church ; now though the  
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Baptism of Profelytes was not thought necessary to be continued to their descendants, they being supposed to be sufficiently cleansed from their heathenish impurities by their forefathers Baptism, yet they could not be admitted into the religious Community of the Jews without Circumcision, which was not only a sign, but *a seal*, which confirmed to them all the privileges of that Covenant. ROMANS IV. 11. In like manner, under the Christian Dispensation, it is necessary that all who are converted from other Religions, should be baptized with the Baptism of Profelytism, which was the Baptism of JOHN, a Baptism of renunciation of their former errors, and repentance for their former sins.

But those who afterwards descended from them could not stand in need of that Baptism, not being born in the same corrupt and defiled state in which their fathers had been, but in that into which they were brought by their Baptismal Purification from it ; notwithstanding this, both they and their progenitors must be under a necessity of being baptized with the Baptism of Christ, which is a Baptism of Initiation, intended to enter them into the Church of Christ, and make them partakers of the privileges of the Gospel Covenant. It is evident therefore that the former of these must cease whenever Profelytes from other religions ceased to be admitted, but the later must be continued down to all the succeeding generations of those who make profession of Christianity, it being an initiating Ordinance equally fitted and intended for all.

The evidence for the continuance of christian Baptism to the offspring of christians will receive yet stronger light from the consideration of its derivation and original. I think it has been made  
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appear under the former Proposition, with a very high degree of probability, that it was derived from the Initiation or Consecration of the Jewish High Priests to their office, and that they were thereby invested with that dignity and authority which belonged to it; and it has also there been made evident, that not only our blessed Lord, but all his disciples and followers were to be consecrated to a like honourable and sublime character by this Baptismal Consecration of Christ: now it is very plain, that this solemn investiture of the Jewish Priests was not intended to convey the same dignity to their descendants and successors, but that every one of them was obliged to undergo a fresh dedication and consecration to their office; it was ordered by God to be a *Statute for ever to Aaron and his seed after him*. EXOD. xxviii. 43. and whoever of his descendants that should be Priest in his stead, was to be consecrated in the same manner. EXOD. xxix. 30. LEVIT. vi. 22.

The Jewish history informs us, that the same method of Consecration was continued down through every period of that state, as far as it was possible to be used. As the Baptism of christians therefore is intended for the same purpose of Initiation and Consecration to the dignity and privileges which attend the members of Christ's Church, and as they are declared to be *sanctified*, or consecrated to be made the *Sons of God*, and *Kings and Priests to him* thereby, it is evident that it must be of the same extent and continuance with the Baptismal Consecration of the Jewish Priests; and that none can be admitted or accounted members of the Christian Community without it: for as the Priests under the Mosaick Dispensation were not born so, but only with qualifications for obtaining that character and office which was afterwards

wards to be conferred on them by a solemn designation and appointment thereto, so also the descendants of Baptized christians do not derive their christian character and denomination from their birth, which only qualifies them for, and intitles them to it, but are invested with it by that Baptifmal Consecration which Christ has appointed for that purpose.

The same method of procedure is also observed in civil or political societies and communities, whenever any person is naturalized, or brought over from a foreign government and jurisdiction; by a special act and institution for that purpose, he is only thereby intitled to the protection and immunities of a common subject, and can receive no claim of honours or employments in that state thereby, these must afterwards be conferred upon him, by a particular grant from that government of which he is a subject, and he must be invested with them in such form, and upon such conditions, as the laws and customs of that constitution require: a compliance with these may indeed, by the favour of the prince and his own personal merit, raise him to offices of trust, power and profit, but these must of necessity die with him, and cannot in ordinary cases descend to his offspring, who, like all other natural born subjects of the State, of how great antiquity soever their descent and pedigree may be, must in person acquire the peculiar dignities and prerogatives of the Community in the same way with their predecessors. By Naturalization subjection to other Governments is renounced and abjured, its subjects are reduced to a state of nature, and they are put only in a capacity and condition of natural born subjects, till by further engagements and stipulations of duty and allegiance, they become candidates  
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for the lucrative grants and offices of trust and power which are to be conferred on them, and with which they are to be invested according to the rules and institutes of that Government into which they are admitted as compleat Denizens.

Now it is manifest, that these civil procedures bear an exact resemblance to the religious observances made use of at the time of our blessed Saviour's appearance, in order to admit persons to become subjects of his spiritual Kingdom ; by profelyte Baptism they were naturalized, were drawn over from the service of false gods, or a corrupt worship of the true God, to subjection and obedience to the Eternal and Supreme God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and were hereby obliged only to the performance of those duties, and intitled to those benefits which Natural Religion demanded and conferred ; this prepared and disposed them for those superior honours and privileges which Christ, as King of his Church, was impowered to bestow, and to which by his own appointment they could become intitled no other way, than by a Baptism of Initiation and Dedication to his service. It is plain therefore, that only civil Naturalization, and profelyte Baptism, are hereditary, but that political Institution, and religious Initiation into civil and sacred societies, are necessary to all who become compleat and privileged members of them.

So that the analogy there is between the Baptism of Christ, and the methods made use of both for religious and civil Initiation, as well as its probable derivation from the solemn Consecration of the Jewish High Priest by Baptism with water, yield a very strong presumptive argument for its Universality and Perpetuity. But this will receive yet further confirmation, if the determinations

tions of Christ and his Apostles about this matter be duely considered. What has been alledged from the Apostle PAUL under the foregoing Objection, concerning hereditary and relative holiness, is so far from being an argument against the continuance of christian Baptism, that, upon a strict examination, I am perswaded it will be found strongly to support it; the texts refered to are ROMANS xi. 16. *if the Root be holy*, says the Apostle, *so are the Branches.* and 1 CORIN. vii. 14. *For the unbelieving Husband is sanctified by the Wife, and the unbelieving Wife is sanctified by the Husband, else were your Children unclean, but now are they holy.*

In order to understand in what sense the *holiness* here spoken of is meant by the Apostle, it must be inquired, what the signification of the word *holy* is; as it is used in the scriptures of the Old Testament; and I believe the most exact search will discover only two senses in which it is taken, one of them of a negative, the other of a positive nature; it is used negatively where any person or thing is said to be holy on account of its being exempted, or freed from uncleanness and defilement of any kind; it is used positively when persons or things are solemnly devoted to God, and consecrated to his service. I have already given instances of the later kind of *holiness* in the Consecration of the High Priests and Levites to their office; to which might be added, the Consecration of the Tabernacle and Temple with the Altar, and other vessels belonging to them, and many other things.

To illustrate the first kind of it I shall only select one instance out of many, and it is that of animals which were appointed to be reckoned clean or unclean; the later of these were deemed  
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unholy, and defiled those who eat of them ; the former were accounted pure and holy, and might be made use of without any defilement arising from it ; this is plainly asserted to be the design of that law. LEVIT. xi. 44. *Ye shall not defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth ; but ye shall sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy, for I am holy.* I have the rather chosen this instance because there is a manifest allusion to it, in that vision which was represented to St. PETER. ACTS x. 11, 12 and 13. in which the state of the Jews and Heathens was figured by that of *clean and unclean Beasts* ; and the command which ordered him to kill and eat of them indifferently convinced him that pious and devout Heathens were, by the Divine Appointment, to be accounted equally holy and undefiled, and intitled to the same priviledges with pious Jews ; for he tells us. ver. 34, 35. that by this *he perceived that God was no respecter of Persons, but that in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him* ; and a little before he tells CORNELIUS and his companions, *Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation, but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.* ver. 28. from whence it appears, that the Jews accounted all besides themselves to be in an unclean and polluted state, even so far as to cause defilement to a Jew by converse and intercourse with them ; on the contrary, they esteemed themselves a people naturally holy and free from all pollution and uncleanness.

This preference which they attributed to themselves, above all others, was not without some good foundation, for they were the people of God in such a sense as no other nation or people

were, being taken into Covenant with God, whereby they were entitled to peculiar and distinguishing blessings; so that they are called *a holy people to the Lord*; and the Lord is said to have *chosen them to be a special people to himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.* DEUT. vii. 6. and xiv. 2. And elsewhere they are called *a holy nation.* EXODUS xix. 6. *The holy Seed.* EZRA ix. 2. ISAIAH vi. 13. and *the righteous nation.* ISAIAH xxvi. 2. Whereas the uncircumcised Heathens were reckoned to be *unclean.* ISAIAH lii. 1. and xxxv. 8. And they are said by the Apostle PAUL to be *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* EPH. ii. 12.

Now this holy character, on account of which the Jews so highly valued themselves, was not appropriated to them as a distinct family and people from all others, nor was it derived from their Circumcision, and other ritual observances enjoined them by God, for their descendants, before they were circumcised, were esteemed *a holy Seed*; and such as became Profelytes to the worship of the true God were entitled to the same character before they were admitted to a participation of the Jewish Ceremonies and Worship: this will appear evident from a consideration of the derivation and original of this *holiness*, it was conveyed down to them from ABRAHAM the Father of this People, who was entitled to this holy appellation before he was circumcised, and before God established that peculiar and appropriating Covenant with him, by which he and his offspring were distinguished from all the families and nations of the earth; for antecedent to this God had promised *to bless him, to make his name great, and to multiply his Seed to an exceeding great nation*;

nation; and that he would *be his Shield, and his exceeding great Reward.* GENESIS xii. 2. xxii. 17. xv. 1. And the ground and reason of those favours which God declared he would bestow upon ABRAHAM and his Seed, we are told was his Faith, or his Belief and Worship of the one true God, in the midst of many idolatrous nations that surrounded him; this Faith of his appeared so strong and illustrious in his forsaking the land of his nativity, and going to a place he knew not, at the command of God, and in his reliance on the divine Promise, that he should have a Son born to him, when both he and his wife were past age, that upon this, and other accounts, God esteemed and declared him to be an eminently righteous and holy Person, and for his sake attributed this character also to his descendants, his relations, and his whole household; nay, even to all who were followers of his Faith in the everlasting and true God §.

There is the surest authority for what I have here asserted from the determination of the Apostle PAUL, which exactly corresponds with it. ABRAHAM was *blessed of God*, he tells us, in that *his Faith was imputed*, or accounted, *to him for righteousness.* ROMANS iv. 3. Wherein this blessedness consists he tells us, v. 7, 8. *viz.* in the forgiveness of sin, that sin particularly of Idolatry, in which he had lived before he was called of God; for there is reason to think, that ABRA-

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§ That the words righteous, *δικαιος*, and holy, *αγιος*, are used promiscuously to denote a renouncing of Idolatry, and adhering to the Faith and Worship of the true God, appears from their being used in a like opposition to a state of Infidelity. 2 COR. vi. 14. 1 COR. vii. 14. And a righteous man is expressed by one that feareth God, or a Profelyte to his Worship. ACTS x. 22.

HAM was, in other respects, a just and upright man before; but when was he made partaker of this blessedness, and when was this righteousness reckoned to him, the Apostle tells us, that *it was not when he was in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.* v. 10. From whence it appears, that *God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles*, it being one and the *same God who justifies the circumcision by Faith, and the uncircumcision through Faith.* ROMANS iii. 29, 30. And therefore *the blessing of Abraham must come on the Gentiles*, in the same measure and extent as it did upon himself and the Jews who were his natural seed.

Now the extent of this blessing, as it was granted to ABRAHAM, will plainly appear from observing who were comprehended in it, when it was further enlarged by God's entering into a special and peculiar Covenant with him, whereby God engaged, in a distinguishing manner, to be *a God to him, and his seed after him.* GENESIS xvii. 7. of which Covenant and the blessings of it Circumcision was appointed for a sign and seal; and here we find that his whole household, not only *those that were born in his house*, but *those servants that were bought with money*, even all over whom he had any authoritative influence were to be the subjects of it, and whoever did not submit to this Ordinance was to be *cut off*, or excluded from being of the number of *God's covenant people.* v. 12, 13, 14.

So that they must have been partakers of that holiness which was ascribed to ABRAHAM before, otherwise they could not have been entitled to the superior privilege of becoming the peculiar people of God; neither can it be said, that this privilege was granted them on account of their  
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being possessed of the same Faith in the true God which ABRAHAM the Father of that Family had, for since there were *three hundred and eighteen* Servants belonging to his household, capable of bearing arms some time before this. GENESIS xiv. 14. it is evident there must be a great number who were not arrived to an age capable of manifesting their Faith in God; and amongst those who were arrived to ripeness of understanding, it is very probable that, as they lived among the idolatrous Heathens, very few of them had given any good evidences of the strength of their belief in the supreme God, much less such illustrious ones as ABRAHAM had done, and yet they were made partakers of the divine blessing, and entered into the peculiar Covenant of God together with him.

The reason of this proceeding was, that they were under the care and tuition of faithful ABRAHAM, a man most firmly established in the service of the true God, and devoted to his interest; and God himself alledges this reason for the distinguishing blessings which he had conferred upon ABRAHAM, his family, and his seed, in the next chapter. GENESIS xviii. 19. *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.* So that this holiness which was imputed to ABRAHAM on account of his Faith in God, was not merely personal, but was also conveyed to all those who belonged to his family, and were subjected to his care; and a like privilege was also conferred on all those *who walk in the steps of that Faith of their Father ABRAHAM, which he had being yet uncircumcised.* ROMANS iv. 12. For

all his successors who resembled him in renouncing their heathenish idolatries and superstitions, and discovering their Faith in the true God, were accounted alike holy with him, and conveyed the same sanctity to their Descendants and Household; for this reason ABRAHAM is called *the heir of the world*. v. 13. being the first born of those who were entitled to this sacred character, which others, who were partakers of the same Faith, were to inherit after him; on this account also he is called *the Father of all them that believe*, because he was the predecessor and patern of all those who renounced their idolatrous worship, and devoted themselves to the service of the living and true God. v. 11.

This spiritual relation of his, as the Father of Believers, is referred to by the Apostle as a part of the promise which God made to ABRAHAM. v. 17. quoted from GENESIS xvii. 4. *I have made thee a Father of many nations*, or “a Father of those of all nations, who shall conform themselves to thine example by a true Faith in me;” for this promise *was not given to Abraham and his natural seed, or his seed by the Law only, but to those who were his children by the righteousness of Faith*. v. 13. *They who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*. ROMANS ix. 8. *So that they that are of Faith, to whatever nation they belong, the same are the children of Abraham*. GALAT. iii. 7. And if those who are partakers of his Faith are his children, then they are also his heirs, heirs of the same promises and privileges with him, *they are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*. GALAT. iii. 29. and consequently, they must have the same privileges conveyed to them as he himself was invested with;  
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so that as these were extended to the offspring, relations and dependants of ABRAHAM, they must in a like manner be extended to the offspring, relations and dependants of such as are followers of his Faith. It may therefore be justly concluded, that all who became Profelytes to the Faith of the true God, in after ages, must convey the same sanctity to their families and households as ABRAHAM did to his, and must therefore become entitled to the priviledges of that distinguishing Covenant which was made with him, by which Covenant God engaged himself to be *a God to him, and his seed after him.*

And we have not only the undoubted practice of the Jewish Nation in admitting Profelytes, together with their families, to the priviledges of that distinguishing Covenant, to confirm this account of a derivative and hereditary holiness, but it is also authorized by an express injunction from God. Exodus xii. 48, 49. *And when a stranger, προσηλυτος a Profelyte, shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near, and keep it; and he shall be as one born in the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him who is home born, and to the stranger that sojourneth among you* \*. From whence it manifestly appears, that the Profelyte, or Believer in the true God, became entitled by his Faith to equal priviledges with those who were born of the stock of ABRAHAM, for he was accounted as *one who was*  
F 4 *home*

\* This same injunction is repeated with little variation. NUMBERS xv. 15, 16. And indeed the whole Law of MOSES supposes the Sojourner, or Profelyte, to become intitled by his Profelytism to the priviledges of the Covenant, in as extensive a manner as those who were born of the seed of ABRAHAM.

*home born*, and conveyed the same sanctity to his offspring and dependants, with those who were original descendants from the family of ABRAHAM; and it is also evident from hence, that the Profelyte himself could not be admitted to a participation of that distinguishing Covenant, unless he brought his whole family to a submission to that Ordinance which was appointed as the initiatory Rite for admitting them into it, which is exactly the same as God required of ABRAHAM when he entered into Covenant with him. See GENESIS xvii.

So that it is abundantly manifest, that as ABRAHAM was justified or became holy by his Faith in God, and thereby communicated a like holiness to his offspring and dependants, in the same manner all subsequent Profelytes to that Faith, together with their families, were thereby justified and accounted holy, and had an equal share in that Covenant, whereby God engaged himself, in a peculiar manner, to be their God: and that this privilege was not confined to those who embraced the worship of the true God, according to the Mosaical Institution, may be clearly shewn; for though all the people of Israel were entitled by Birthright, as descendants of ABRAHAM, to the Covenant made with him, yet they had another Covenant superadded to that, which incorporated them into a particular State and Polity, whereby God engaged himself to be their civil and political Governor and Lawgiver, and they became subject to those positive and municipal statutes and injunctions which were ordained by him.

That this was a Covenant of a different nature from that made with ABRAHAM, MOSES himself tells us. *It was not the Covenant which God made with their Fathers, but with them in person who were alive at that day.* DEUT. v. 2, 3. And it added



no spiritual priviledges to the former Covenant, but was of a much more restrained and servile nature; so that the Jewish state is described by the Apostle, as a State, of pupilage and servitude. GALAT. iv. 1, 2, 3. its Laws and *Elements* as *weak and beggarly*. v. 9. and the Covenant on which it was founded as *gendering unto bondage*. v. 24. It is very unlikely then, that such a Covenant as this could add any new priviledges to that made with ABRAHAM, or confine those which were granted to him and his seed in the fullest and most extensive manner within its narrow bounds; that it did not is asserted by the same Apostle in express words. ROMANS iv. 13. *The promise that he should be the Father of them that believe, was not made peculiarly to Abraham, and to his seed through the Law, but to those who were his seed through the righteousness of Faith.* For, as he argues in the next verse, *if they who are of the Law be heirs, Faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.* And therefore he concludes. v. 16. *that the Promise, which God made to ABRAHAM, was made sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the Faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all; the Father not only of Jews but of Christians, who are equally his seed by promise; and therefore he tells us at the conclusion of the chapter, that Faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, but not for his sake alone, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*

This same argument is further insisted upon. GALAT. iii. 16, 17, 18. *To Abraham and his seed, the Apostle tells us, were the Promises made, by the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ; (or to, or on account of Christ, for so the Proposition*

position <sup>as</sup> signifies) *the Law therefore, which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul it, (οὐκ ἀνυπόσκει does not deprive it of its superior authority and priviledges) so that it should make the Promise of none effect. For if the Inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of Promise; but God gave it to Abraham by Promise; which is what he before proposed to prove. v. 14. That the blessing of Abraham come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; and which he asserts, yet more strongly, in the last verse of the chapter. If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise.* Whoever therefore became Profelytes to the Faith of the true God, as revealed and confirmed by Christ, were thereby entitled to all the sublime priviledges included in the Covenant made with ABRAHAM, they were justified \*, and became holy in the same sense and extent as he was, and conveyed a like holiness to their offspring and dependants.

It is manifest then that christians, whatever their descent be, as well as the natural descendants of ABRAHAM, and those that became Profelytes to the Jewish Faith, have a compleat title to the Covenant made with him; and indeed, that  
this

\* As the word *Faith* is used in different senses in the New Testament, and there are several degrees of it supposed necessary to the compleating the christian character; so there is a Justification appropriated to the several advances we are required to make *in Faith*; there is a progress demanded of us in order to obtain the justifying righteousness of God from *Faith to Faith*. ROMANS i. 17. The first step of the christian's Faith is a perswasion of the divine authority and mission of Christ, and this is sufficient to entitle to an admission into his church; but there are higher improvements in it, such as, and are, productive of Love and Obedience, which are necessary to final Justification, and obtaining the reward of the inheritance of eternal Life.

this is the very same Covenant which all christians are now under : there are but two distinct Covenants made by God, which we read of in the holy Scripture, one of them, that of Mount Sinai, which *gendereth unto Bondage*, on which was founded the earthly Jerusalem, or Jewish State ; the other, that of ABRAHAM, on which the Gospel Dispensation, the *Jerusalem from above*, is built, a Dispensation of freedom and the most glorious priviledges. GALAT. iii. 24, 25, 26. The former of these was long since abolished, and christians are every where declared to be exempted from any subjection to it. It is plain then, that the only Covenant which christians can be under must be the latter of these, which is said to be a *better Covenant, and established upon better Promises*, and is called *an everlasting Covenant*. GENESIS xvii. 7. such as with regard to its nature and design, its priviledges and blessings was never to have an end, but was to be continued to all the ages and families of the world.

The christian Covenant has indeed the title of *a new Covenant* given it, being published afresh, and its terms and priviledges more fully explained, and more strongly ratified and confirmed by Christ, to whom it had an original view, and on whose account it was granted ; but that it is no other than the Covenant which was made with ABRAHAM, is evident from its having the same priviledges annexed to it, and its requiring the same qualifications and dispositions of those who were to be partakers of it.

The general Promise contained in the Gospel-Covenant, and that of ABRAHAM, is the very same, *viz. I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.* GENESIS xvii. 7. *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a People.* HEBREWS viii.

viii. 10. And the particular blessings contained in this Promise are the same also in both; *the forgiveness of sins* is asserted to belong to the Covenant, made with ABRAHAM, by the Apostle PAUL. ROMANS iv. 7. And the same privilege is ascribed to the christian Covenant, by the writer to the Hebrews. Chap. viii. 12. The promise of the Spirit is also reckoned as one of the blessings granted to ABRAHAM. GALAT. iii. 14. And the same is every where asserted to be a privilege pertaining to the Gospel Dispensation. See ACTS ii. 28. HEBREWS viii. 10. Nay, even the most glorious of all the blessings which are ascertained by Christ, the Resurrection of the Dead, and a State of everlasting Happiness is contained in the promise made to ABRAHAM, on which the Covenant with him is founded; this is what our Lord incontestably proves. MATTHEW xxii. 31, 32.

The qualifications also required for inheriting the privileges of the Gospel Covenant, and that of ABRAHAM, are not at all different; the demand of that from ABRAHAM was Faith in the living and true God. GENESIS xv. 6. ROMANS iv. 3. that of Christ had the very same disposition required in order to partake of it. ROMANS iv. 24, and there were the very same manifestations and effects of Faith insisted upon in both of them; those demanded from ABRAHAM were, *walk before me, and be thou perfect*. GENESIS xvii. 1. (*εὐαγγελίᾳ εὐαγτίον ἐπὶ καὶ γυνὴ ἀμειπτος*, be thou well pleasing and without blame) The terms of the christian Covenant are, *Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect*. MATTHEW v. 48. *Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work*. COLOS. i. 10. *Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke*. PHILIP. ii. 15.

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The righteousness required under the Covenant made with ABRAHAM, and that of the Gospel, is also the very same, even the *righteousness of Faith*; or a sincere and upright conduct arising from a principle of Faith in God: and the description which the Apostle PAUL takes from MOSES, of the way of discovering wherein this righteousness does consist, and applies to the Gospel Covenant, affords a full confirmation, that there is not the least difference between them. ROMANS X. 6, 7, 8. DEUT. XXX. 11, 12, 13, 14. the words of MOSES are \*, *For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us into heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.* Which words the Apostle quotes, and explains

\* That MOSES is here describing the Covenant made with ABRAHAM is plain, not only from the Apostle's declaration, but also from a view of the place itself. At the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, MOSES begins his recital of the Laws of the Horeb Covenant, which he tells them *was not the Covenant God made with their Fathers*; and this is continued to the end of the 28th chap. The 29th begins with an account of another Covenant, which MOSES was commanded to make with the Children of Israel in the Land of Moab, besides the Covenant which he made with them in Horeb; and that this was a renewal of the Covenant made with ABRAHAM appears from its having the same promise annexed unto it by God, that they should be a *People unto himself, and that he would be unto them a God, as he had sworn unto their Fathers, to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob.* v. 13. and also from its having the same subjects who were entitled to it, viz. *Their little ones, their wives, and the strangers in their camp; and not only such as were then present, but those also who were not with them in that day.* v. 11, 15.

explains in the following manner. *The righteousness which is of Faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? i. e. to bring Christ, or the Will of Christ, down from above; or who shall descend into the deep? i. e. to bring up the Commandments of Christ from the dead. But what saith it? The word, or Law of Christ, is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart. Thine own reason and conscience, assisted by the holy Spirit, is sufficient to direct thee what the Will of Christ is. ROMANS x. 6, 7, 8.*

This corresponds directly to the account which the author to the Hebrews gives of the New or Gospel Covenant. *This is my Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. And they shall not be under a necessity to teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, or his Will; but all shall know me, or be in a capacity of knowing me, from the least to the greatest. HEBREWS viii. 10, 11. quoted from JERE. xxxi. 33, 34. I shall add no more, in proof of the identity of the Gospel Covenant with that of ABRAHAM, but the assertion of the Apostle, that the Covenant made with ABRAHAM had originally a respect to Christ, and was granted upon account of him. It was ratified or confirmed before of God in Christ, ἐν Χριστῷ. GALAT. iii. 17. For which reason the Gospel, i. e. the terms, as well as the glad tidings of Salvation by Christ, is said to be preached before unto Abraham. v. 8.*

It appears then from the foregoing pages, that ABRAHAM was justified, or acquired an holy character, by his Faith in the living and true God, and that he conveyed this sanctity to his progeny and relations, and to their descendants, through-

throughout all succeeding generations, by the same Faith. It is also apparent; that this privilege was not confined to the natural posterity of ABRAHAM, but that all those who, like him, relinquished Idolatry, and embraced the Faith and Worship of the true God, were made partakers of a like holiness, and conferred it also on their successive descendants in after ages. It is likewise evident, that this sacred denomination was not a prerogative peculiar to the worshipers of the true God under the Mosaick Dispensation, but that believers under the Gospel have an equal right to this holy character, are justified in as full and extensive a manner as ABRAHAM was, and enjoy a like privilege of conferring this sanctity on their relations and offspring; and it is even manifest, that the Covenant or Promise which God made to ABRAHAM is the very same with the christian Covenant, and that all who embrace the Faith of Christ are interested in every privilege and blessing of it.

Now this is exactly agreeable to the representation which the Apostle PAUL gives us of the privileges of christians under the dispensation of the Gospel, in those two texts which I quoted under the Objection against the continuance of Baptism, at the entrance upon this Proposition. ROMANS xi. 16. *For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.* I CORIN. vii. 14. *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* In the former of these texts the Apostle asserts the right which those of the Jewish nation, who embraced Christianity, had of being accounted the People of God, and of being admitted into the christian Church,

Church, on account of their descent from ABRAHAM, and also the equal right which converts to the same Faith from among the idolatrous Heathens had of being made partakers of the same christian priviledges. In the latter he proves, that these priviledges were not confined to the persons themselves, whether Jews or Gentiles, who embraced the Faith of Christ, but were also conveyed, on their account, to their relations and offspring, in the same manner as they had been communicated to the descendants of ABRAHAM, and other Profelytes to the Faith, under the Mosaick Dispensation. This will plainly appear from a distinct examination of the texts.

In the first the Apostle declares, that *if the root be holy, the branches are also holy*; not only those branches which immediately sprung and grew out of ABRAHAM their root and stock, but those likewise who were *grafted in amongst them*, by their embracing of the Faith of Christ, were entitled to an holy character, and had a right to an admission into the Church of Christ: for as Faith gave them this title, so unbelief excluded them from it, and for this reason a great part of the Jewish nation, those *natural branches had broken themselves off* from the stock on which they grew by their unbelief, or their rejecting the authority of God, in disregarding those religious Injunctions which he had revealed by Christ. v. 17. But in lieu of this, there was a large supply of converts to the Church of Christ, from the Gentiles and idolatrous nations, who by embracing the Faith, became entitled to the same priviledges with those who were naturally of the stock of ABRAHAM, in the same manner as they had usually been received under the Jewish Law. In their former state, they were *branches of a wild Olive*



*Olive Tree*, but by their Faith in God they were *ingrafted into a good Olive Tree amongst the natural Branches*, and *partook of the same fatness*, the same privileges with them. ver. 17, 24. But then the Apostle warns them, that though they were admitted to this honour and happiness, they were in equal danger with the Jews of being again broken off by a departure from the Faith, because *if God spared not the natural Branches*, it could not be supposed *that he would spare them, but they also should be cut off*. ver. 21, 22. And he assures them that the Jewish Nation, notwithstanding their apostacy, when they should return to the Faith, should be *taken in again*, and, together with the fullness of the Gentiles, should be admitted into the Church of Christ, and become God's Covenant People. ver. 23, 24, 25.

So that it appears from this discourse of the Apostle, that all true believers, of whatever nation or family, were rendered holy and branches of the stock of ABRAHAM, and were intitled to an admission into his Church by their faith in God; and therefore it may rationally be concluded, that they had not only the same right of enjoying, but an equal power of conveying the same privileges with those who were originally descendants of ABRAHAM. And this is what the Apostle asserts in the second quoted text. 1 CORIN. vii. 14. which words are plainly introduced in answer to a question which had been disputed amongst the CORINTHIANS, whether it was lawful for a Christian and an Infidel to live together in a married state after the conversion of one of them \*? The Apostle

\* This doubt seems to have been occasioned by an injunction of the Law of MOSES contained in DEUT. xxiii. ver. 2, 3, &c. whereby those of certain nations were excluded

posible directs, that though the partner in wedlock should happen to be an unbeliever, yet there was no necessity of their separation upon that account, unless the unbelieving party was so resolved; and the reason he gives is this, that *the unbelieving Husband is sanctified by the Wife, and the unbelieving Wife is sanctified by the Husband.* i. e.

“ In like manner as under the Jewish oeconomy,  
 “ when a person became a proselyte to the faith  
 “ of the true God, his relations and dependants  
 “ were thereby usually sanctified, and became in-  
 “ titled to an admission amongst the number of  
 “ God’s people, so is it also now without any ex-  
 “ ception; whosoever of you are Christians,  
 “ you convey a sacred character to your Partners  
 “ and Families, they become holy on your ac-  
 “ count, and if they persist not to refuse, they  
 “ may be admitted into the Church of Christ in  
 “ the same manner with yourselves”.

The Apostle adds, by way of confirmation of this, *else were your Children unclean, but now are they holy.* i. e. “ You are convinced and allow  
 “ that your Children are sanctified, and have ob-  
 “ tained a right of admission into the Church of  
 “ God by means of your conversion to the faith.  
 “ Infants of proselytes had a title to this priviledge  
 “ under the Mosaick Dispensation, and derived  
 “ it from the grant made to ABRAHAM, which  
 “ Grant has never been revoked; now the same  
 “ promise which conferred this right on the Chil-  
 “ dren of Proselytes, conferred it also on their near  
 “ Relatives and Dependants; if your offspring  
 “ therefore are holy, and have a title to the Co-  
 “ venant

from the Congregation, or Church of the Jews, notwithstanding their marriage with those of that Community, and this exclusion was extended to their offspring, to the third and sometimes to the tenth generation.

“ venant, as you must be ready to acknowledge,  
 “ since they have been entered into the christian  
 “ Church by Baptism together with yourselves,  
 “ your Partners also have the same title founded  
 “ upon the same Grant and Promise, for your  
 “ priviledges are now the same under Christianity  
 “ as they would have been under the Jewish oeco-  
 “ nomy had you been profelytes to that; and  
 “ every person who embraces the faith of Christ,  
 “ is to be admitted into his Church upon the same  
 “ terms as then, and conveys the same rights to  
 “ his Relations and Descendants as he would have  
 “ done under that Dispensation”.

It is abundantly evident then, that all believers  
 in the true God, both under the Jewish and Chri-  
 stian Dispensation, have a right by their Faith to  
 be admitted into his Church amongst the number  
 of his Covenant People, and also that this Faith  
 of theirs confers the same priviledge on their  
 household, and their progeny throughout all suc-  
 ceeding generations. The only question now re-  
 maining is, “ Whether there be any external  
 “ Sign, any formal Rite required by the Law of  
 “ MOSES, or the Gospel of Christ, as necessary to  
 “ the admission of profelytes and their posterity  
 “ to the priviledges of those Dispensations”?  
 Now it is undeniable that under the former of  
 these, Circumcision was enjoined as an observance  
 of an indispensable obligation for that purpose; it  
 is called the *Sign and Seal of the Covenant*, that  
 which gave them a title to its priviledges, as the  
 signing and sealing a deed confers a title to an  
 estate; all who were admitted to a Covenant Rela-  
 tion to God were required to be entered by this  
 Rite, and every one who was not initiated in this  
 manner, was cut off from a participation of the  
 character and the priviledges of God’s chosen peo-  
 ple;

ple; and this observance was appointed to be continued down to all succeeding generations, not only of the descendants of ABRAHAM, but of all others who embraced the faith and worship of the true God. See GENES. xvii. 9. EXOD. xii. 48, 49. ROMANS iv. 11.

But as Circumcision, together with the Jewish Law, was abolished by Christ, it remains to be inquired, "Whether any other Initiatory Ordinance has been appointed by him to be substituted in the room of it"? I think it is very evident from the words by which it was instituted, that Baptism is this Initiatory Ordinance, and that it is altogether as necessary to Christians as Circumcision was to the Jews; it is for this reason, and it can be for no other, that Baptism is called *the Circumcision of Christ*. COLOS. ii. 11, 12. in which text Christians are said to be *circumcised with the Circumcision made without hands*, ἀχειροποιήτως, a Circumcision not by manual operation, in which only a small part of the filth of the flesh is put away, but such as requires the whole body of sin to be put off; which is done by being *buried with Christ in Baptism*, which may therefore be fitly called the *Circumcision of Christ*, as answering the same kind of intention, though in a much more noble and extensive degree. And as the general end and intention of Baptism is the same with that of Circumcision, so it is founded on the same promise, and has the same privileges annexed to it, even those which were granted to ABRAHAM at the appointment of Circumcision.

The Apostle PETER having convinced the Jews and Proselytes, to whom he addressed his discourse, of the divine authority of Christ, insomuch as to put them upon an earnest inquiry what they should do to obtain salvation by him, answers them in these



these words. ACTS ii. 38, 39. *Repent and be Baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the holy Ghost; for the Promise, viz. that of your admission into the Christian Covenant, and receiving the spirit of adoption as the sons of God, is made not only unto you, for your own private and personal benefit, but to your Children and offspring also; nay, even to those that are afar off\**, τοῖς ἐξ ἡμῶν, to such as are strangers amongst you, and natives of the nations of the heathen, in the very same manner as this Promise, when it was first made to ABRAHAM, was extended not only to his natural descendants, but to those who became proselytes from among the idolatrous Gentiles; even as many as the Lord our God shall call, shall be called and intitled by their Faith to the same privileges with ABRAHAM, the Father of them that believe; amongst which, as I have already shewn, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the holy Ghost are included.

So that Baptism having the same end with Circumcision, being founded on the same promise, and having the same privileges annexed to it, it may rationally be concluded, that it must be of equal necessity under the Christian Dispensation, as Circumcision was under that which took its rise from ABRAHAM; and that none can be admitted into the Christian Covenant, and be made parta-

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\* The word ἡμῶν is used twice in one chapter in the very same sense as I have here given it. EPHES. ii. 13, 17. In the former place, they who are said to have been afar off, are called in the preceding verse *aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers to the Covenant of Promise*; in the later, those that were afar off are distinguished from those that were nigh, in that before they were *Strangers and Foreigners*, but were now become *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*: ver. 19.

kers of its blessings without it. But I shall not rest the proof of the universal and perpetual necessity of Christian Baptism on this argument alone, since there are several other texts in the New Testament which are express and full in asserting of it.

The first text therefore which I shall consider, shall be that which contains the determination of our blessed Saviour himself with regard to this matter in JOHN iii. 3, 5. In this place he tells NICODEMUS; that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God*; and that *except a man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. I cannot but think that it deserves to be taken notice of, that these words were applied to Christian Baptism, and urged to prove the necessity of it, by all the Fathers who lived in the *first* Centuries after Christ; and this carries some weight with it, as they must be supposed to have the best opportunities of knowing in what sense they were used by our blessed Lord: but I shall not lay the stress of the argument contained in them upon their authority, for I hope to make it appear that they had sufficient reason for thus interpreting them, both from a careful examination of the meaning of the several phrases used in them, and an impartial consideration of the scope and design of their delivery.

The first phrase I shall inquire into shall be that of *Kingdom of God*; now it is evident and indisputable that there are *two* senses in which these words are used in the New Testament; in one of them they must be understood of the Kingdom or Church of Christ here upon Earth; in the other they signify the Kingdom of Glory in Heaven; that they are used in the later sense I suppose I shall have no occasion to prove, as it is a thing acknowledged

ledged by all; that they are also taken in the former sense the evidence I think is not at all inferior; thus Christ tells the Pharisees, who were at the same time charged with the unpardonable sin of Blasphemy against the holy Ghost, that *the Kingdom of God was come unto them.* MATTHEW xii. 28, 31. and surely this could not be the Kingdom of Glory; in another place Christ threatens to *take the Kingdom of God from the Jews, and give it to another Nation,* which cannot mean the heavenly Kingdom, as they were not in possession of it. MATTHEW xxi. 43. And when the Pharisees demanded of Christ, *when the Kingdom of God should come,* his answer was, *the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there, for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.* LUKE xvii. 20, 21.

In these texts it is manifest, that the meaning of the phrase is confined intirely to the Kingdom and Church of Christ here upon Earth; and there are many other texts where it must necessarily have the same signification; I shall only refer you to the following. MATTHEW iv. 17. MATTHEW vi. 33. MATTHEW xiii. 41. LUKE x. 9, 11. MARK i. 15. and ROMANS xiv. 17. for I should be too tedious if I were to quote them all. But though there is such plain evidence for this double sense of the words, *Kingdom of God*, I think they may both be fairly reduced to one, and that without the least wresting or misapplication of them; they may be supposed to signify the whole of the Gospel Dispensation, from its infancy and begining in this world, to its maturity and perfection in Heaven; for the Kingdom of Heaven is but one and the same state, viz. a state of Holiness, and of Happiness resulting from it, whether it be considered as growing and advancing in the militant Church

of Christ on Earth, or arrived to its utmost splendor and exaltation in his triumphant Church in the regions of Glory ; and as the words are capable of being understood in this large and comprehensive sense, I think there is not only just reason, but an absolute necessity of interpreting them so in the text I have now under consideration.

The verbs to which these phrases are joined seem to require this signification, for in the third verse it is said, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God* ; and in the fifth, *except a man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God* ; that *seeing the Kingdom*, and *entering into it*, do not mean one and the same thing is very evident, the former denotes only a knowledge and acquaintance with the laws and institutions of the Gospel Dispensation, which was not allowed to any but such as had voluntarily and publickly entered themselves to be Christ's disciples ; for thus Christ tells them in a place exactly parallel and similar to this. MARK iv. 11. *Unto you it is given to know the Mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to them that are without, i. e. are not admitted into my Church, all these things are done in Parables* ; or, as St. MATTHEW expresses it, *to them it is not given*. MATTHEW xiii. 11. and the very same word is used in the next verse as well as in MATTHEW, to denote this knowledge which St. JOHN uses, *ὅτι ᾤδοντες* ; so that *seeing the Kingdom of God* is plainly equivalent with knowing its mysteries, or its doctrines and duties.

The other phrase, *enter into the Kingdom of God*, is, I think, of a much larger extent, and seems equivalent to an expression frequently used in other places, viz. *inheriting the Kingdom of God*, or being subject to its laws and injunctions, and acquiring a possession of its high privileges and rewards ;  
thus



thus it is represented by our blessed Saviour as a matter of the greatest difficulty for those *who trust in Riches to enter into the Kingdom of God*; i. e. to yield a due subjection and obedience to its mortifying and self-denying duties. MARK X. 24. And in the fifteenth verse of the same chapter it is said, *whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God, as a little Child*; i. e. who does not entertain the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel with a like ready and good disposition of mind, *he shall not enter therein*: it is used in the same sense MATTHEW XXI. 31. but in other places it seems to have a peculiar reference to the being put in possession of the rewards and glories of Christ's future and everlasting Kingdom. MARK IX. 47. and ACTS XIV. 22. and this difference of signification which I have supposed there is betwixt *seeing* and *entering* into the Kingdom of God, will be further illustrated and confirmed by considering the meaning of the words with which they are connected, and which point out the way and means of acquiring a title to those priviledges; for the former it is required that we must *be born again*, or from above, *again*; for the later it is necessary that we be *born both of Water and of the Spirit*.

The expression *born again*, though it be sometimes used by heathen authors in a like sense, was undoubtedly taken by our blessed Lord from a common way of speaking used amongst the Jews; when any person among them entered upon a new state, where there was a prospect of his injoying some valuable priviledges and blessings, he was said to have a new Birth given him, in the same manner as the word is frequently used in our own language; but notwithstanding it was applied by them to civil and common affairs, it had a peculiar and distinguishing application given it, to that change of  
state

state and condition which profelytes to their Religion underwent by their renouncing Heathenism, and imbracing the faith and worship of the true God; by this they were said to be regenerate, and to be *born again*, or from above, they entered upon a new, a heavenly life, became Subjects and Children of God, and were intitled to the protection and priviledges of his peculiar people; and the Rite by which they were admitted to this dignity is universally asserted by the Jewish writers to be Baptizing, or washing them with water; and this is the origin of the second expression made use of by our blessed Saviour, *except a man be born of Water*.

This significative custom of Baptizing Christ had adopted as the initiating Rite of admitting profelytes into that pure and holy Religion which he was setting up in the world, and had positively ordained that none should become members of his Church, or subjects of his Kingdom, without being made partakers of it; and as Circumcision was to be abolished, he appointed this to be the only Initiatory Ordinance by which all persons whatever, in all ages of the world, should be intitled to the blessings of the Gospel Covenant: but then to the being *born of Water*, Christ also adds the being *born of the Spirit*, as a thing of absolute necessity to their being made partakers of its highest and most glorious advantages; by the former they are admitted to a participation of its external priviledges, and become nominal and visible members of Christ's Church; by the later they become real ones, have divine and heavenly Graces planted in their hearts, which, if rightly cultivated and improved, will grow up into a holy and religious temper and conduct, and bring forth  
fruit

fruit unto everlasting life \*. So that being *born of Water*, or being Baptized, is necessary to an outward profession of Christianity, and the knowledge of its laws and mysteries; and what is consequent to it, a *being born of the Spirit*, or having the gracious influences of the holy Spirit of God conferred upon us, is equally requisite to our partaking of its most sublime blessings, and its most glorious rewards.

My next inquiry must be, “How far this interpretation which I have given of the words, “is agreeable to the scope and intention of our “blessed Lord in this discourse”. NICODEMUS who gave occasion to it, we are told, was a man of great power and authority among the Jews, and he was also a Pharisee, a Sect who made the most solemn pretensions to Religion, and were strongly bigoted and attached to the Mosaick Law and Ceremonies, inasmuch as to look upon them as of a necessary and unalterable obligation; this resolute attachment to the Religion of his Country appears from the manner of his coming to Jesus, which was *by night*, with the utmost secrecy, that he might avoid the observation of those who were of his party; and the manner of his address was equally cautious, though insinuating; *Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do those Miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* i. e. ‘We have reason to ‘apprehend from the extraordinary miracles ‘which you perform by a power which seems to  
‘ be

\* What is here called being *born of the Spirit*, is in other places expressed by the phrases *born of God*, a *renewal of the mind*, and *of the spirit of the mind*, the *renewing of the holy Ghost*, &c. which expressions evidently denote an inward change in the temper and disposition of the soul formed in the followers of Christ by his Word and Spirit.

‘ be from God, that you are a Prophet sent by  
 ‘ him with some important message to us his peo-  
 ‘ ple, we are therefore desirous to know what your  
 ‘ commission and message is’. That our Saviour  
 understood the words of NICODEMUS as implying  
 a question of this kind, is very plain from his an-  
 swer to him; *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except*  
*a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of*  
*God.* i. e. ‘ I perceive by the manner of your ad-  
 ‘ dressing me, that you are desirous of my ac-  
 ‘ quainting you with those discoveries which, as a  
 ‘ Teacher from God, I have a commission to  
 ‘ make; but I assure you this request cannot be  
 ‘ granted, except you partake of that new Birth  
 ‘ which is necessary for all who will become my  
 ‘ disciples’.

The expression *born again*, which our Lord  
 makes use of, was so common among the Jews,  
 that there was no reason to think NICODEMUS could  
 have been at a loss to comprehend the meaning  
 which he intended by it; and doubtless he would  
 not, had he not been prepossessed by the opinion  
 which prevailed amongst his own Sect, that the Jew-  
 ish Religion was unalterable, by the profession of  
 which he was already one of the people of God,  
 and therefore needed not to be born into that, or  
 any other Religion, as proselytes from Heathen-  
 ism did; this erroneous conceit reduced him to  
 the absurdity of interpreting the words in a literal  
 and proper sense, of a natural and fleshly birth,  
 for thus he replies, *How can a man be born when he*  
*is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's*  
*womb, and be born?* i. e. ‘ I am sensible that the  
 ‘ phrase, *born again*, is frequently applied amongst  
 ‘ us to the solemn admission of proselytes from  
 ‘ Gentile Nations to our Religion, but as I was  
 ‘ born and educated in it, and have always made  
 ‘ a zealous



‘ a zealous profession of it, I cannot imagine that  
 ‘ you can inculcate the necessity of my being entered  
 ‘ into it afresh; and I know of no other sense  
 ‘ in which your words can be taken, but that of  
 ‘ a literal and natural birth, which seems to me  
 ‘ to be equally impossible’.

The whole of our Saviour’s reply to NICODEMUS affords a strong confirmation, that this was the difficulty which staggered him, for in the fifth verse Jesus answers, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* i. e. ‘ What-  
 ‘ ever opinion you may have entertained of the  
 ‘ unchangeableness of your Religion, this I assure  
 ‘ you, that I am appointed to declare and establish  
 ‘ a new and more perfect one, into which it is necessary  
 ‘ that all who become my disciples should  
 ‘ be entered, by Baptizing them with water, in  
 ‘ the same manner as proselytes are admitted into  
 ‘ your Church; and as that Kingdom and Church  
 ‘ of God, of which I am constituted Head, is of  
 ‘ a spiritual nature, it is necessary also that the  
 ‘ temper and disposition of their spirits should be  
 ‘ renewed, and brought to a conformity to the  
 ‘ pure and holy nature of my Religion, which  
 ‘ change must be wrought in them by the influence  
 ‘ of the holy Spirit, and of that divine Doctrine  
 ‘ which shall be communicated by his guidance  
 ‘ and inspiration’. Ver. 6. *That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* i. e. ‘ Were the supposition,  
 ‘ you have made, possible, yet still such a Birth  
 ‘ could only produce an animal and fleshly substance,  
 ‘ endowed with such bodily senses and appetites  
 ‘ as you now have, and you could be intitled thereby  
 ‘ to no privileges superior to those which belong to an  
 ‘ animal life; whereas the re-  
 ‘ generation

‘ generation I am speaking of is of a spiritual nature, proceeding from the Spirit of God, and evidencing itself by a renunciation of error and vice, and a renovation of the heart and life to a heavenly and spiritual temper and conduct’.

Verse the seventh, *Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.* i. e. ‘ You have no reason to be surprized that I expect a compliance from you, who are a Jew, with this appointment, in order to your becoming my disciple, since being born of water is what you yourselves count necessary to all who become profelytes to your Religion; and an unprejudiced attention will as clearly discover the necessity of a spiritual Birth, and remove all difficulties with which you may be imbarassed concerning it; with this view I am therefore willing to assist your apprehension by a familiar illustration’. Verse the eighth, *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* i. e. ‘ You know there is such a thing as wind by the sound it makes, and the effects it produces, yet it is a thing absolutely invisible, and you are unacquainted whence it derives its force, or how far its power extends; in like manner you may discover this new and spiritual Birth, though invisible to sense, by the change it makes in a man’s temper and conduct, though you may be still ignorant in what way the Spirit of God effects this change, or in what measure, and to what objects its influences may be communicated’.

Notwithstanding our blessed Saviour had thus clearly explained what he meant by being *born again*, NICODEMUS appears still to be either unable

or

or unwilling to comprehend it, for the answer he gives him, verse the 9th, is, *How can these things be?* i. e. ‘ All that you have said cannot yet convince me of the possibility or necessity of this Birth, which you insist upon as a necessary qualification for all who will become your disciples’. To which Jesus replies, verse the 10th, *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* i. e. ‘ I am greatly astonished, that you who fill so high a station in the Jewish Church, and must on that account have a thorough acquaintance with its usages and doctrines, should still declare yourself at a loss to understand such things as are evidently derived from thence; you cannot surely be ignorant, that all who become proselytes to your Religion are obliged to be baptized, and that hereby they are said to be *born again*; and you might have as well known, what being *born of the Spirit* means, had you attended to your own Prophecies, which plainly foretel that large effusion of the Gifts and Graces of the holy Spirit which is to be bestowed on the People of God in the days of the Messiah, which are now begining’.

I might have continued this Paraphrase throughout the whole of our Saviour’s discourse to NICODEMUS, so as to make it appear not only perfectly consistent with my interpretation of the *New Birth*, but affording a strong confirmation of it; but I apprehend this will be thought needless, as the foregoing explication makes it abundantly evident, that being *born of Water* can mean nothing else but being baptized with it; that this is equally necessary to all, in order to their being entitled to the privileges and rewards of the Christian Covenant, with being *born of the Spirit*; and that therefore none can have a right to the  
denomi-

denomination and character of a Christian without it. And this interpretation which I have given of the words will receive great strength from comparing it with a passage parallel to it, which we have. TITUS iii. 5. *According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost.* The washing here mentioned can signify no other than Christian Baptism, and this is stiled a *washing of regeneration*. i. e. a Baptism of Initiation, by which they were born into a new religious state; or, as our Lord expresses it, *born again*, or *born of Water*; and this external regeneration was also accompanied with a *renewing of the holy Ghost*. i. e. with an internal spiritual change of the heart and temper, which our Saviour calls *being born of the Spirit*; and by both these *they were saved*. i. e. made true disciples of Christ, and put into a state of salvation; and therefore both the external and internal Birth must be absolutely necessary to the obtaining salvation by Christ.

There is another text which I cannot pass by, as it affords a convincing proof of the necessity of Baptism to all the professors of Christianity, and that is the declaration of our blessed Lord to his Apostles just before his Ascension; which is recorded. MARK xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* Now it is evident from the verses going before and following these words, that *believing* here signifies Faith in Christ, and such a Faith only as is a sufficient qualification for Baptism into his Religion; and this, as I shall hereafter make it fully appear, is no more than believing him to be the Messiah, or that Prophet whom God had promised to send into the world for the instruction and edification of his Church.



The only words which require a critical examination here, are those of being *saved* and being *damned*. That these must not be taken in their fullest and most absolute sense of a final and unalterable sentence of Salvation and Damnation, I think there is strong reason to conclude, for it would be a very severe impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of the Father of mankind, to suppose him determining the eternal state of his creatures and children, only by their observance or neglect of *two* single acts; especially, as one of them is confessedly no more than an external and positive Ordinance, and the other is out of the power of many persons, who are, without any fault of theirs, ignorant of Christ, though they have otherwise proper dispositions for believing in him: and I know not how it can be reconciled with the justice of God to reward the vilest of Baptized Christians with an eternity of happiness, while the most pious and virtuous of those who are unavoidably without the knowledge and faith of Christ, are upon this account adjudged to the Damnation of Hell. It is certainly much safer to conclude, that JUDAS and SIMON MAGUS, though they believed and were Baptized, yet were not thereby saved, because the Scripture says of one of them, that he *was the Son of Perdition*; and of the other, that he *was in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity*. On the other hand, it is a much more reasonable supposition, that ENOCH and NOAH, not to mention many of the pious Heathens, are not among the damned, though they had no clear discoveries of Christ, or Faith in him, since it is said of both, that *they walked with God*; and of one of them, that he *was translated alive into Heaven*. The words under consideration must therefore be restrained to a more

limited sense, in order to avoid those inconveniences which would flow from an unguarded explanation of them.

Should it be said, “ That though the promise of  
 “ Salvation is made to Baptism and the Faith which  
 “ accompanies it, yet it is only on condition of a  
 “ final perseverance in that Faith, and a careful improvement of that Baptism; and that Unbelief is  
 “ only damning, when it is wilfully continued in,  
 “ notwithstanding the best means of conviction are  
 “ offered.”—I have nothing to object to this, as it does not oppose but rather confirm the meaning in which I apprehend the words ought to be taken, which, upon a thorough consideration, I persuade myself, will be found to be this, *viz.* That Faith in Christ openly professed by being Baptized into his Religion, puts the Baptized person into the way of Salvation, and entitles him to the most efficacious helps and advantages for attaining it; whereas Unbelief debars a man from these aids and privileges, so that hereby he is in the direct way to expose himself to everlasting Condemnation. Being *saved* then here only signifies a being brought into a state of Salvation, and being *damned* no more than being in a state which will probably issue in Damnation.

I should not have presumed to have put this construction upon the words, had I not found the same incapable of any other sense in divers places of Scripture, some of which will be necessary to present to your view for the confirmation of it: and here, I suppose, I need mention no more than those which represent Christians in general, very soon after their Conversion and Baptism, as being actually saved, or put in possession of Salvation by Christ; thus Acts ii. 47. those that were *ad-*  
*ed to the Church* are called *the saved*, τῶν σωζομένων;  
 and

and 1 CORIN. i. 18. those who were converted by the preaching of the Gospel; are said to be such as *are saved*; and thus also those who were called to the profession and privileges of the Church of Christ, are declared by the Apostle *to be already saved*. 2 TIMOTHY i. 9. In the same manner it is said of ZACCHEUS, upon his acknowledgment of Christ's authority, *This day is Salvation come to this House*. LUKE xix. 9. And by St. PAUL, that *Salvation was come unto the Gentiles*, in consequence of their belief and profession of the Gospel of Christ. ACTS xxviii. 28. ROMANS xi. 11. Nothing, I think, can be more evident, than that those who are in all these texts said to *be saved*, and to *have Salvation come to them*, were not at that time, and perhaps many of them never will be, in possession of everlasting Salvation; they were, only by their conversion, in a fair way to obtain it, and upon this account alone they are said *to be saved*: and as this signification of the word is most agreeable to our Saviour's declaration concerning Baptism, and rescues it from unfurmountable difficulties, I imagine there can be no doubt but that it was intended to be thus understood.

And that being *damned* is also used here in a like qualified sense, is equally apparent from its plain meaning in other places; thus Christ tells NICODEMUS, while he is discoursing to him on the same subject, that *he that believeth not, is condemned already*. JOHN iii. 18. The word in the original is, *καριται*, *damned*, being the same word which is used by our Saviour in the the text under consideration, only with an omission of the compounding preposition, *κατα*, which makes no alteration in the signification, the being used promiscuously in other passages of Scripture; thus

ROMANS xiv. 23. it is said, that *he that eateth is damned if he eat*, κατακεριται, he is in a state of condemnation, because in a state of sin. I might mention other texts to the same purpose, but these, I apprehend, will be sufficient to shew, that the word *damned* is not always used to denote actual Damnation, for none of those here mentioned were actually damned, but only in a condition by which they were exposed to Damnation; or, as it is expressed, MARK iii. 29. *were in danger of eternal Damnation*; and if the words of our Saviour be taken in this sense, they will be a plain and easy rule, and will not be liable to any difficulty, or uncertainty of construction.

Upon the whole then, I think it is abundantly evident from this text, that there is the same necessity of Baptism as of Faith to entitle persons to Salvation by Christ; and that whether the words *saved* and *damned* signify actual Salvation and Damnation, or only states tending to these; for if Baptism is necessary to put a man into a state of Salvation, it must be necessary to his actual participation of it, and one or both these senses must be intended in the fore-examined words; so that unless a person be Baptized, and thereby entered into the Gospel Covenant, he can have no title to the means of Salvation by Christ; nor, consequently, to that everlasting happiness wherein it consists; though it would be an harsh and unwarrantable conclusion from hence, that every one who is Baptized, shall upon that account be finally and actually saved; or that any one who is not Baptized, shall merely for that reason be eventually damned.

There is no need, I imagine, to add any thing to the foregoing assertions of our blessed Saviour, as a further proof of the necessity of Baptism to all  
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the professors of his Religion; however, as there is one text more which relates to Baptism, and has a near connection, in its intent and meaning, with those I have last considered, I hope my Reader will indulge me in a brief examination of it, which I am the more desirous of, as I would omit no part of Scripture which appears to have any relation to this Institution. The text I refer to is that in the 1 PETER iii. 20, 21. *When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing; wherein a few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even Baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.* In these words there is a manifest comparison formed between the Ark, by means of which NOAH and his family were preserved from the flood, and Baptism, by which christians are delivered from a greater destruction\*; and if we carefully attend to the similitude we may easily discern wherein the corresponding parts of it do consist.

The Ark was only an arbitrary and appointed instrument, and means of preserving NOAH and his house; infinite wisdom and almighty power might have ordained many other ways for his deliverance, but this particular way was what God

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saw

\* That the Antithesis is here placed right betwixt the Ark and Baptism, and not betwixt the Water and it, will appear from a view of the words. The Ark was that in which those few Souls were saved, *Κιβωτος εις ην διασωθησαν*, and it was by Water *δι υδατος*, by means of its floating on the Water: Baptism is that by which Christians are saved, *Βαπτισμα νυν σωζει*, and this is by the Resurrection of Christ, *δι αναστασεως Χριστου*, by means of the virtue and efficacy of his Resurrection. *Κιβωτος* here plainly answers to *Βαπτισμα*, and *δι υδατος* to *δι αναστασεως Χριστου*.

saw fit to appoint, and for this reason, because it afforded an illustrious proof of the Faith of NOAH, manifested in his assent to the truth of God foretelling this universal Deluge, and in his putting himself to immense labour and expence in building this Ark which God had commanded him to prepare for his preservation; so that NOAH's Faith, evidenced by his conformity to the divine direction, was the immediate and efficacious cause of his deliverance and salvation; whereas the rest of that corrupt generation were destroyed by the overflowing flood, through their unbelief, this causing them to disregard the warnings of God given by NOAH, the *preacher of righteousness*. 2 PETER ii. 5. for which reason NOAH is said, not only to have *saved himself*, but to have *condemned*, *κατεκρινε* *damned*, *the world by his Faith*. HEBREWS xi. 7. Not that his Faith was the cause of condemnation to all the rest of mankind, but only it produced such a difference in their conduct as put believing NOAH into a state of salvation, and left the unbelieving world in a state of destruction.

*The like figure whereunto, even Baptism doth also now save us*, or as the words may be more literally rendered, *the Antitype*, *αντιτυπον*, to which, *Baptism doth also now save us*. Baptism is the appointed means of Salvation to us, as the Ark was to NOAH, but not the cause of it, with regard to us, any more than the Ark was to him, both of them being arbitrary appointments from God, and depending upon him for their efficacy and success; that which makes Baptism effectual to Salvation, is the Faith and Obedience which accompanies it, without which the meer outward Ordinance is unavailable, though preparatory thereto; for as the Apostle adds, *it saves us*, not as it is a means of *putting away the filth of the*

*the flesh*, not as it purifies from bodily defilements or ceremonial uncleanness, but as it includes in it *the answer of a good Conscience towards God*, as it implies and promotes a corresponding purification of the heart and conscience from error and vice, and all the evil works of the flesh: both the external sign and the internal Grace of Baptism, are therefore necessary to Salvation by Christ, the former by his own appointment, the latter by its aptness to fit and qualify for it, one of them putting the person into a state of salvation, the other entitling him to it.

There is but one remark more which I think necessary to be made on this last text, which is, that NOAH'S Faith was efficacious not only for his own Salvation, but likewise for that of his Family; for we are told by the Author to the Hebrews. ch. xi. 7. that hereby *he saved both himself and his House*, upon which account he is called at the end of the verse, (as ABRAHAM and all Believers are) an *Heir of the Righteousness which is by Faith*. So that the Faith of NOAH appears, both by its nature and its effects, to be typical of, and to bear an exact resemblance to, that Faith which is the foundation of the Abrahamick or Gospel Covenant; by virtue of which I have already shewn at large, both the believer and his descendants were made joint partakers of its blessings, and of that Rite by which they were appointed to be admitted into it; and also that the same privilege was conveyed down to all succeeding generations, until their own personal unbelief excluded them from the Covenant, and all the advantages therein contained. This is a strong confirmation of what I have before proved, that all Believers, as well under the Christian as the Mosaick Dispensation, confer on their Relatives and Offspring a right of admis-

sion into the Covenant, by virtue of that Faith on account of which they themselves acquired a title to it: and as I have likewise shewn, that Circumcision was the Rite and Sign of admission into the latter of these, which being abolished, Baptism was appointed by Christ to succeed in the room of it, I think it is manifest that Baptism must be appointed for the same end, and with an equal necessity; and I have accordingly demonstrated, that the intent of Baptism was to initiate persons into the Church of Christ, as Circumcision was before; and also, that as all who were not partakers of Circumcision before Christ, were for that reason cut off from being of the number of God's People, so under the Gospel Constitution none can be subjects and members of it, or be entitled to its priviledges without Baptism, since our Lord asserts it to be absolutely necessary to every one, in order to his entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, and that no one can be saved, or be put into a state of salvation, unless he become a partaker of it.

Baptism then being proved to be absolutely necessary for all Christians, the only question now remaining to be decided is, "What is the most just and proper time of life in which it ought to be administered?" Now the necessity of this Ordinance to the christian character and profession affords a strong presumption, that all who have a title to it ought to be put into this State as early in life as possible, that they may not be in danger of missing the benefits of it: but this presumptive argument will be raised into a very powerful and conclusive one, by considering at what *Age* the Rite of Initiation into the Covenant was appointed to be administered at its first institution, and this was in the most tender Infancy of Children,



Children, even when they were no more than *Eight Days old*. GENESIS xvii. 12. At this age they were admitted into the Church of God, and were made partakers of the privileges of that everlasting Covenant which God made with ABRAHAM and his spiritual Seed after him; and when this Covenant was again renewed by all the People of Israel, after forty years sojourning in the wilderness, their *little ones*, and *the strangers in their camp* were included in it, as well as all the grown men of Israel. DEUT. xxix. 10, 11.

Now that the Christian Covenant is the same with this I have also proved, which must therefore confer a title to its privileges at the same time of life as it did at its first institution; nothing then but a plain and express Repeal can deprive Infants of this right of being admitted into Covenant, which they had enjoyed from the days of ABRAHAM to those of Christ: and there is the highest probability, that the gracious and beneficent Saviour of mankind would not deprive the most innocent and well disposed part of his rational creatures of that privilege, which they had without interruption enjoyed throughout so large a number of ages, without any fault or forfeiture of theirs. Had it been our Saviour's design to annul this grant we should certainly have had some plain intimation of it from him, but there is not the least appearance of such a Repeal in the whole New Testament; nay, we have there very strong arguments to evince its continuing in full force. Our blessed Lord positively declares, that Infants are fit Members of his Church, and Subjects of his Kingdom, and they could not therefore be destitute of a right of admission into it; and the Apostle PAUL makes it an unquestionable supposition, that the Children of Believers

lievers under the Gospel Dispensation are holy, and by consequence have a right to be admitted into the Covenant by Baptism. These, with other texts which might be alledged, are a sufficient proof of this grant's continuing still in force; and I am confident nothing equivalent or comparable to this can be urged from the word of Christ in proof of a Repeal of this privilege of Infants, which yet must be absolutely necessary to their deprivation of it.

Should it be said, as it has been often said, "That the nature of the Institution implies an exclusion of Infants from it, because they are incapable of understanding its meaning, and complying with its design, while they are in a state of Infancy". I answer. The same argument is equally conclusive against the admission of Infants under the Jewish Dispensation, and even from the first institution of the Covenant, because they were during all that time under an inability of comprehending its signification, and furthering its intention; and if this was a disqualification, there were very few persons in proportion to the whole who were actually in Covenant with God from ABRAHAM unto Christ, and perhaps not many more from that time unto this day; and I am sure such a supposition would imply an unwarrantable diminution of the largeness and comprehensiveness of the divine Covenant, as well as utterly contradict a great number of the declarations of Scripture.

If it should be still urged, "That if our blessed Lord intended Infants should be made partakers of Baptism, there can be no good reason given, why he did not particularly mention them when he gave the Commission to Baptize; nor why there is no hint of any such injunction  
" in

“ in the writings of the Apostles, or any instance  
 “ of the practice of it in the History of their Acts”.  
 It may be readily answered, that this very plain  
 and convincing reason may be given for it, viz.  
 That such a particular injunction was altogether  
 needless, for it was very well known at that time,  
 that the Baptism in use among the Jews was ad-  
 ministered to the Children of Profelytes at the same  
 time, and in the same manner, as it was to their  
 Parents; and none could be ignorant, that Infants  
 had been admitted into Covenant with God during  
 the whole continuance of their Dispensation; nei-  
 ther could any who attended to the intent and  
 meaning of the Commission which Christ gave for  
 Baptizing, be insensible that it was an Ordinance of  
 Initiation, or Admission into Covenant with God,  
 and they had therefore the utmost reason to con-  
 clude, that it must be intended for all the same  
 subjects as were before profelyted and entered into  
 the Covenant.

It is impossible they should think otherwise, un-  
 less the Commission had contained some express  
 exception to restrain it from this interpretation;  
 and had the Jews entertained the least imagination  
 that their Children were excluded by this appoint-  
 ment from that privilege which they had so long  
 enjoyed, it would have been an unsurmountable ar-  
 gument against their embracing Christianity, and  
 thereby depriving their harmless Infants of that  
 most invaluable right of having God to be their  
 God in Covenant. The Apostles themselves were  
 so tenacious of their antient privileges, that they  
 would certainly have made some remonstrances  
 against such a deprivation; and though they should  
 have acquiesced in it, yet we must doubtless have  
 found many objections in their writings from those  
 Jews whom they endeavoured to convert; but  
 since

since there is nothing of this kind to be met with, it is plain the Commission for Baptism was never understood by them as excluding Infants from it, and it was therefore unnecessary to caution them against it.

The same reason which rendered it needless that our Lord should insert an express injunction for Baptizing Infants in the Commission or elsewhere, made it also needless to mention any particular instance of the Apostles Baptizing Infants in their History. The admitting the Children of believers into Covenant was so common and notorious to all, that there was no occasion to urge any examples in behalf of it; it was not then in the least doubted, and there was no reason to think that it would ever be doubted that Infants have a right to this Ordinance; had any scruple of this kind been likely to arise, it would certainly have been guarded against, either by *precept* or *example*, and the want of these is a plain proof that there was no such thing then thought of; it can be no wonder therefore, that in so concise an History as the Acts of the Apostles, there is no account given of the Baptizing of Infants, since there was no apparent end to be answered by it at that time.

Notwithstanding we have no express mention of the Apostles Baptizing Infants in that History, it must however be allowed, that there is great reason to conclude from thence, that some Infants were actually Baptized by them, though the Author of it, not imagining it would ever be called in question, did not think it needful to give a particular relation of it, any more than our Saviour did in his Commission which he gave for Baptizing. Several instances may be alledged, wherein this appears with great probability. Thus when St.

PETER



PETER had, by his first Sermon after the descent of the holy Ghost, convinced a great number of his hearers of the divine authority of Christ, and had encouraged them to be Baptized into his Religion by this argument, that the promise of admission into the Covenant was not only made *to them, but to their Children*, we are told immediately after, that *they who gladly received his word were Baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about Three Thousand Souls*. Now I think it cannot be imagined, that amongst all this multitude there were none who had any Children, for if they had, it is evident they must have joined the Baptism of their Children to their own, since the promise by which they were induced to it was equally inclusive of both, and they had the same reason for Baptizing their Children which they had for their own Baptism.

Other instances may be added which contain a like probability in them of Infants being Baptized, such as that of LYDIA, who being converted by St. PAUL's preaching, we are told *was Baptized, and her Household*. ACTS xvi. 15. and that of the Jailor in the same chapter, who was miraculously awakened to a solicitous inquiry, *what he should do to be saved*; to whom the Apostles answered, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy House*; and we are informed, that in the same hour he *was Baptized, and all his household*. ver. 31 and 33. To which may be adjoined what St. PAUL says, 1 CORIN. i. 16. that amongst the few which he had Baptized at CORINTH, he *Baptized the Household of Stephanas*. Nothing can evade the force of these instances but the unreasonable and improbable supposition, that in all those Families there were *no Children*; for if there were, it is plain they must be Baptized, since they must

must undoubtedly be included in the term *Household*, according to its constant signification ; nor could it be said consistently with truth, that the Jailor and all his were Baptized, unless his Children, if he had any, were taken into the number.

So that upon the whole, supposing what I have already attempted to prove be true, that Infants were admitted into Covenant with God in the days of our Saviour, and that Baptism was his appointed Sign and Rite of admission, every injunction and fact relating to Baptism must naturally be delivered in the same form and manner in which they now stand in the New Testament, and there could be no occasion of laying down any rules, or producing any examples for Baptizing of Infants, as their title to it was then known and acknowledged by all.

But that my Reader may have a perfect apprehension and conviction of this matter, I hope he will indulge me in my further illustration of it by a parallel case. I will suppose for instance, that after the settlement of Virginia was effected in the Reign of Queen ELIZABETH, this wise and virtuous Princess should have issued an order to the Governor of the Province, that all the Natives who would submit to her government, and enjoy the protection of subjects, should be clothed in a manner suitable to what was used in her home Dominions ; and that the edict was made with a view not only to distinguish those who submitted to her authority from Aliens, but for the sake of preserving decency and chastity amongst them ; the Governor to whom this injunction was directed must necessarily conclude from such an absolute and unlimited order, that not only grown persons, but their Children also were to be clothed in the same manner as they were in the English Nation ;

Nation; and should he neglect to conform to it with regard to the Children of the Natives until they arrived to the age of fourteen or fifteen years, none I believe would think that he had fully executed his order; nor that it would be sufficient for him to alledge in his vindication, that such young persons were not capable of understanding the end and design of this appointment, and could not be tempted to unchastity through the omission of it; nothing could have justified him in his neglect, but an exception of this kind, plainly expressed in the Commission he had for this purpose.

Let it be supposed again, that this edict was soon after recorded in the Annals of that Province, and that the conformity of the Natives to it was also there related in the same general terms in which the order was delivered, without mentioning their Infants, but only their Families at large being subjected to it, would there be any reason to doubt at the present distance of time, whether the Children were then clothed together with their Parents? Certainly the fact could admit of no dispute with any who know that at the period when this injunction was given, the Children in England were clothed as universally as their Parents, and that in the aforementioned Province they had all been kept clothed from time immemorial: and should a few of those who were originally Natives of the country, now refuse to clothe their Children upon this pretence, “that there was no law for it, “nor any proof of its being practised when their “ancestors were first subjected to the English Government”, I apprehend such persons would be deemed extremely weak or obstinate, and undeserving of the protection and privileges of subjects.

Let

Let this illustration then be applied to the case of Baptism. From the first institution and establishment of the Covenant and Church of God, it is certain there was a solemn form of Investiture appointed for admission into it ; by this form Infants were invested with this dignity together with their Parents, and the same method of Investiture was continued without interruption for many hundred years, even to the time of our Saviour's appearance ; when our blessed Lord, by divine authority, renewed and confirmed this privilege without the least restriction, but only with a small alteration in the Rite of admission, and extended it beyond the bounds of that Nation to which it had been before confined, so as to include all the people of the earth who should subject themselves to his government. That all such persons as were before intitled to it, must then also have a right to this grant, is a thing which can admit of no dispute ; and as Infants had at all times before been admitted to wear the badge of the Covenant, it could not be doubted but they were still to be arrayed in the Livery of the Church, and were intitled to put on Christ by Baptism as well as their Parents ; their right to this Ordinance is conveyed to them by the same decree with that of their Parents, and it must therefore be the highest piece of injustice to exclude them from it.

For a conclusion of this Proposition, suffer me only to address myself to such as make a profession of Christianity, and yet slight or oppose this Institution of Christ, either with respect to themselves or their Children. The absolute necessity of it, in order to the partaking the Christian Character and Profession, and enjoying its privileges, has been made abundantly evident ; it is the Rite which Christ has appointed for admission into his Church,



Church, for matriculation into his School, and for entering into his Kingdom ; it must therefore be indispensably requisite to the becoming members, disciples, and subjects of Christ ; without it you are incapable of putting on Christ, and of receiving vital nourishment and growth from him, you have no title to the influences and aids of his Spirit, or to any of those glorious blessings and advantages which he offers you ; without it you are aliens from the commonwealth of his Church, strangers to his Covenant of Promise, without hope in him, and out of the way of salvation by him. Let not this representation of your case seem harsh and severe to you, for there is no more severity in it than what Christ and his Apostles have laid a sufficient foundation to charge it with, as you may see by consulting many places of Scripture before quoted. Let me beseech you then not to condemn this Appointment of Christ by a continued refusal of compliance with it, for in refusing it you reject the counsel of your best friend, your only Saviour ; you reject that counsel which would be unspeakably advantageous to you ; you reject it against yourselves, and to your own irreparable hurt and loss. LUKE vii. 30.

Thus far indeed you are only injurious to your own true and best interest, enemies to your souls and their everlasting salvation. But the injury which attends your conduct is not confined to your own persons, for the same delusion which prevents your entering yourselves into the Christian Covenant by Baptism, must unavoidably restrain you from conveying this privilege to those dear and tender parts of yourselves, your Children. You may indeed profanely give up your Birthright by an inconsiderate contempt of it, or you may forfeit it by an unbelief in Christ, or a disregard of

his authority in appointing this Institution, but your Infants can neither forfeit or reject it ; it is a portion given them by their heavenly Father, and confirmed to them by the most solemn Covenant and Promise, an unalienable inheritance, derived down to them from the first of their believing Ancestors ; no human authority can therefore be empowered to deprive them of it, it is the gift of God to them equally with their Being, and as you are instruments of conveying the one, they have a right to receive the other also from you.

Through your means your Children are made partakers of a natural Birth, are born into a world where they are exposed to sin and suffering, and will you deny them that spiritual Birth which gives life to their souls, and puts them in possession of spiritual and divine blessings ? You would be thought, and you would think yourselves, very inhuman and unjust should you deprive them of that food and raiment which is necessary to the support and strength of their bodies, their animal and mortal part, and can you judge yourselves less criminal in denying them that spiritual nourishment which is alike necessary to the life of their precious and immortal souls ? God has made sufficient provision for both, and has given you an equal charge of conveying it to them, what excuse then can you alledge for withholding from them the richest and most valuable part of that sustenance to which their heavenly Father has given them an irrevocable right ? No attainments of your own, no advantages you can confer on your offspring, can compensate for the loss of those blessings which Baptism will make you partakers of ; your conduct is unjustifiable in excluding yourselves from them, it is more so in defrauding both yourselves and your Children of this privileged ; but  
partiality

partiality and want of affection must be added to the charge if you lay hold of it yourselves, but deny it to those who ought to be as dear to you, and have an equal title to it ; your duty therefore to them, and to yourselves, earnestly demands your compliance with this Institution, for it is the *means* which Christ has appointed for communicating a new and spiritual Birth both to them and you, and for conveying those gracious influences which are necessary to your growth in holiness, and your attainment of everlasting blessedness. Be no longer then regardless of this privilege, a privilege which contains nothing less in it than having the all-sufficient God to be *a God to you, and to your Seed after you* ; and what greater character, what nobler relation, what superior blessing can you sustain or possess, than that which Baptism confers on you and your offspring, of having the most high God to be *their Father and your Father, their God and your God* ?

### PROPOSITION III.

The only Qualification requisite for Baptism is a well-disposed and teachable mind, or a temper and spirit free from all prejudice against the Doctrines and Laws of Christ, and ready to receive and entertain them when fairly proposed.

The most proper and likely way of discovering what preparatory qualifications are necessary for the participation of Baptism, is a careful observation of its nature and design ; for these being known, whatever enables a person to comply with them is sufficient to qualify him for it. Now the

intent of this Ordinance I have abundantly proved, under the first Proposition, to be nothing more than to devote and dedicate the subjects of it to the service of Christ, and to initiate them into his Church and Religion; such a temper of mind therefore as will dispose them to entertain the truths which Christ reveals, and to yield obedience to the duties he enjoins, must be a proper qualification for this initiatory and consecrating Institution. The Commission by which Baptism was appointed declares its design to be discipling, or making disciples to Christ, and what more can be necessary to fit persons for becoming his disciples and scholars than a teachable disposition, a mind open to instruction, and ready to receive those proposals which he, as a Teacher from Heaven, was authorized to make? By representing the Christian Constitution as his School, our blessed Lord therefore gives us to understand, that all who are disposed to learn of him have sufficient qualifications for being initiated and matriculated as his Scholars by the Baptismal Ordinance.

This receives further confirmation from the other representation which Christ gives of Baptism in the third chapter of JOHN, as the Rite of Investiture into his Kingdom and Church, by which his adherents are entered amongst the number of his subjects, and are intitled to the privileges of his chosen and peculiar people; and must it not be sufficient to qualify them for this, that they are well disposed to submit to his authority, to own him as their Lord and King, and to rely on him for affording that protection, and those favours, which this relation encourages them to expect from him? And if Baptism be considered as the instrument and token of Regeneration and Adoption, I cannot see that any thing more is necessary to the  
receiving



receiving the character of *the Sons of God*, than a temper of mind disposing to filial duty and obedience. So that in whatever light the Scripture represents this Sacrament, I am perswaded it discovers nothing more as a necessary qualification for it than an humble, obsequious, unprejudiced disposition.

I am not without apprehension that it may be here said with great propriety — “ That there are  
 “ positive and express qualifications required in  
 “ the holy Scripture for admission to Baptism,  
 “ and that these ought much more to be regarded  
 “ ed than any deductions from the nature and design  
 “ of the Ordinance, or from such characters  
 “ under which it is represented; for whoever examines  
 “ the accounts we have of the administration of Baptism  
 “ in the Acts of the Apostles, will find that *Repentance towards God, and Faith*  
 “ *in our Lord Jesus Christ*, are demanded as necessary  
 “ preparations for it. There is an instance of the former  
 “ in what PETER required of the first converts, ACTS ii. 38. *Repent, and be Baptized*  
 “ *every one of you*; and of the latter in PHILIP’s answer  
 “ to the Eunuch, for when he inquired what should hinder  
 “ him from being Baptized, he tells him, *If thou believest with all*  
 “ *thy heart, thou mayest*. ACTS viii. 36, 37. Now as these  
 “ qualifications were esteemed necessary to the participation  
 “ of Baptism by the Apostles of our Lord, how can any thing  
 “ short of this be at any time deemed a sufficient preparation  
 “ for it.”?

I have no other answer to make to this objection, but that I allow what is alledged in it to be very just and reasonable, provided the words *Repentance* and *Faith* be rightly understood, and agreeably to the sense in which they are always used,

when they are applied to represent the qualifications necessary to Baptism ; for I am persuaded that, upon the strictest examination, these qualifications will amount to no more than what is asserted in this Proposition, and that nothing else is intended by this demand from the Candidates for Baptism, than a renunciation of their erroneous and corrupt principles and practices, and a readiness to entertain and observe the doctrines and duties which Christ should propose. But as these two qualifications are in themselves distinct, it will be necessary to allow them a separate examination.

The first of them, and that which was preparatory to the other, is that of Repentance ; this, as has been already shewn, was the qualification required by JOHN for his Baptism, which was for that reason called *the Baptism of Repentance*. MARK i. 4. ACTS xix. 4. and what the nature of this Repentance was may easily be discovered by considering the reason and argument which he makes use of to invite his hearers to it, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. MATTHEW iii. 2. i. e. ‘ Lay aside those perverse dispositions and corrupt prejudices which you have contracted, for these, if maintained and indulged, will be an insurmountable obstacle to your imbracing the Religion of the Messiah, who is now about to appear’. In other places also where JOHN declares his Baptism to be a Baptism of Repentance, he immediately subjoins the intent and design of it to be subservient and preparatory to the reception of Christ, and a more excellent kind of Baptism by him, thus he says, MATTHEW iii. 11, 12. *I indeed Baptize you with Water unto Repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I; he shall Baptize you with the holy Ghost and with Fire; whose Fan is*  
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*in his Hand, and he will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable fire.* The sense of this passage will be best illustrated by an example of a like nature. Let it be supposed then, that an Officer of high dignity had a Commission from his Prince to offer a pardon to a considerable number of rebellious subjects, upon condition of their repentance of their fault, and laying down their hostile arms, would it not be natural for him to address them in a manner similar to that of JOHN in this text?

‘ I am sent (he would probably say) to convince you of the heinousness of the crime of your rebellion, and to make a tender of forgiveness to you upon your forsaking it; and I am empowered to confirm this pardon to you under the seal of my Royal Master, and to give you assurance of his readiness to confer yet more valuable privileges upon your compliance; but if you reject this offer, you may depend upon it that your affronted Lord will shortly come upon you with a pomp and power vastly superior to mine, and will make an awful distinction between the obedient and the rebellious; for as an husbandman carefully separates the chaff from the good corn, burning up the former, and reserving the latter for his own use and service, so will your righteous, though merciful Lord, distinguishing between those that are penitent, and those that are irreclaimable among you, devoting these to utter destruction, but rewarding the other with special marks of his favour and bounty’.

This was the wretched condition both of Jews and Gentiles at the time of JOHN’S ministry, they were rebels against God and his government, they

had rejected the divine authority, and submitted to the dominion of the Devil, who is for that reason called *the Prince of this world*. JOHN xii. 31. xiv. 30. xvi. 11. *The God of this world*. 2 CORIN. iv. 4. *The ruler of the darkness of this world*. EPHES. vi. 12. *The Prince of the power of the Air, the Spirit which was then working in the children of disobedience*. EPHES. ii. 2. This tyrannical domination of Satan diffused itself over the whole moral and intellectual world, in the same manner as the air does over the natural, and like that too insinuated its influence into the internal habit and disposition of the souls of men, as the breath of the body does, *τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐνεργῶν*, exerting its penetrating energy and vital power throughout the whole constitution of his rebellious vassals. Upon this account the whole world is said to lie at that time under the power of the *wicked one*, *ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ*. 1 JOHN v. 19. Yea, even the Devil himself had the insolence to lay claim to this authority over all the kingdoms of the earth, and to tempt our blessed Lord with the offer of being his vicegerent, on condition that he would withdraw his duty and allegiance from his Father, and acknowledge him as his sovereign, by *falling down and worshipping him*. MATTHEW iv. 8, 9. LUKE iv. 5, 6, 7.

It cannot, I think, be judged impertinent to mention a few instances wherein this dominion of the Devil discovered itself both among Heathens and Jews, especially in what they accounted sacred and religious services. The worship of the Heathens was directed to demons, or the ghosts of dead men, or to deities formed by poetick fiction and their own vain imaginations, or to irrational and inanimate creatures; and their most solemn and devout adorations of them consisted of ridiculous, lewd, sottish, and in many cases, barbarous



rous and inhuman observances; and agreeably to the conceptions which they formed of their Gods, they became, in imitation of them, lewd, covetous, revengeful, implacable, unjust, deceitful and cruel in their moral and social conduct. That this account of the general character of the Heathen World is not exaggerated, is apparent from its being the description which the Apostle PAUL gives of them in the *first* chapter to the ROMANS, which is also greatly confirmed by the representation made of them by their own writers, and that not only of the uncivilized and savage nations among them, and such as the polite and learned States of Greece and Rome esteemed and denominated Barbarians, but even of the most accomplished in knowledge, and the most exalted in dignity among themselves; and there never was a time when both learning and power were advanced to a greater height than then. Here then we have very evident marks and proofs of the dominion of the Devil over the Heathen World; the attributes they ascribed to their Gods were diabolical ones, and their Gods themselves, if they had any intelligent existence, were no other than Devils; the worship they paid to them was devilish, such as Satan himself would desire and enjoin; and they were, as to their moral deportment, the very images and slaves of the Devil; so that the religion which prevailed among the Heathens at the coming of Christ was the religion of the Devil, or in the language of the Apostle, it was earthly, sensual, devilish. JAMES iii. 15.

Nor was the character of the Jewish Nation, at that time, much superior to that of the Gentile World; they indeed retained the knowledge and worship of the true God, and were favoured with  
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his special protection and a particular Revelation of his Will, but this Revelation, which they received from the mouth of God, they had greatly corrupted by an unwarrantable addition of their own traditions, and had violated his worship also by a great number of superstitious observances, dishonouring God thereby almost as much as by Heathenish Idolatry into which they had likewise often fallen; and as to their morals we are informed by St. PAUL, that they were in no wise better than the Heathens, but were guilty of the same vices, and had this aggravating circumstance attending their guilt, that by reason of their superior advantages they much more *dishonoured God* thereby. ROMANS ii. 1, 3, 23. iii. 9—19. As the vices of the Jews therefore bore so near a resemblance to those of the Heathens, there is the highest probability that they were equally subject to the dominion of Satan; but this is not meerly probable but absolutely certain, for our blessed Lord puts the matter out of all doubt, by telling them in express words, *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the lusts of your Father, the Devil, ye will do.* JOHN viii. 44. So that it is evident, that both Jews and Gentiles were at that time the subjects of Satan, they were entangled in the snare of the Devil, and were led captive by him at his Will.

Now the errand upon which JOHN was sent, was to recover men out of this state, to call them to a repentance of their Idolatry and Superstition, to grant them a remission of those sins in consequence of it, and to ascertain it to them by a Rite which had been often used for the same purpose under the Mosaick Dispensation. The offence then, for which this pardon was offered by JOHN, being of a publick nature, levelled against the  
divine

divine authority and government, it is plain that the repentance which was required as a qualification for this pardon, must be of the same kind, not a particular repentance of private and personal sins, but a more general one of such sins as directly attacked the sovereignty and dominion of God over his rational creatures; and such a repentance as this was both necessary and sufficient to procure a submission to that authority which God had then delegated and conveyed to his Son, it being impossible that they should submit to his government unless they previously renounced the principles and abjured the leaders of that Rebellion in which they had been engaged; but this being done, there could be no obstacle to hinder them from subjecting themselves to the obedience of their rightful Lord.

Every sin indeed, of whatever nature or kind it is, includes in the notion of it an opposition to the divine authority and government, as it is known, or might be known, to be a breach of God's Law; but as there are many sins which are only of a private nature, and others which are only injurious to our fellow-creatures as the immediate objects of them, so there are some which are primarily and directly oppugnant to God and his honour, such as the sins of Idolatry and Superstition, with which Jews and Gentiles were at that time chargeable; and these contain, in the very essence of them, a withdrawing of a just allegiance to the true God, or setting up false Gods in opposition to him; and it was necessary that these capital and treasonable principles should be renounced, in order to procure a due subjection to the government of Christ, which was the thing which JOHN was sent to make preparation for. The disposition therefore required by JOHN for his Baptism

tism could be no other than an abhorrence of that traiterous usurpation to which mankind had been subjected, and a divesting themselves of those prejudices and aversions to the government of Christ which they had contracted thereby.

And that it was the design of our blessed Saviour to recover mankind out of this state of slavery to Sin and Satan, and to set up the Kingdom of God in opposition to that of the Devil, may be proved with equal evidence, for this is what the Apostle declares of him. 1 JOHN iii. 8. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.* And the Commission which Christ gave to St. PAUL upon his conversion was no other than this, *To open their eyes, (those of Jews and Gentiles) and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* ACTS xxvi. 18. And when our Lord himself entered upon his Ministry, he gave evident proofs of his design, and samples of his power, to overthrow the Kingdom and Dominion of the Devil; for among the great number of miracles he performed there is no particular sort more frequently repeated than that of casting out Devils, which had possessed the bodies of men, and at the same time compelling them to acknowledge that *he was the Son of God, the Messiah, and the holy one of Israel*, to request lenity and mercy from him, and to submit to his direction and disposal. LUKE iv. 34, 41. viii. 28, 31, 32.

The same power over Devils and unclean Spirits was also conferred by Christ on his Apostles; and it was the first and principal part of that authority which he communicated to them, for we are told, that when he had called unto him his *Twelve* disciples, *he gave them power against unclean Spirits, and to cast out Devils.* MATTHEW x. 1, 8. And

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we are informed, that in consequence of it they *cast out many Devils*. MARK VI. 13. When our Lord enlarged the number of his Ministers, by adding *Seventy* disciples more, it is plain that he also renewed this grant unto them, for returning again unto him they said, *Lord, even the Devils are subject unto us, through thy Name*. LUKE X. 1, 17. And the answer which Christ gives them in the next verse evidently shews the principal intent of his endowing them with this miraculous power, to be the overthrowing of the Devil's Kingdom, for says he, *I beheld Satan as Lightning falling from Heaven*; hereby insinuating that his downfall was already commenced, and would speedily be compleated with inconceivable swiftness and amazing force: and this entire conquest over the Devil was obtained by our Lord's victorious Death and Resurrection, for the Author to the HEBREWS acquaints us, *That through Death Christ destroyed him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil*. chap. ii. 14. And St. PAUL tells us, that *by his Cross he spoiled Principalities and Powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them*. COLOS. ii. 15. And this victory over Satan and destruction of his kingdom, was about the same time clearly proved and made manifest to those who were the subjects of it, by confounding their divinations and silencing their Oracles, which were the principal means by which the Devil had kept them in subjection to him, and supported his authority in the world.

Let us now see what the Preaching was which accompanied this powerful and victorious opposition to the Devil's dominion over mankind; and here we shall find, that both the subject of it, and the motive by which it was enforced, were the same with those of JOHN the Baptist; the intent

tent of it being to persuade them to renounce their subjection to the authority of Satan, in expectation of a more glorious and beneficial government which was to be established in the room of it, for immediately upon our blessed Lord's entering upon his Ministry we are told, that *from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* MATTHEW IV. 17. MARK I. 15. The same instructions he gave also to his Apostles when he sent them forth to preach. MATTHEW X. 7. MARK VI. 12.

Now since the Preaching of Christ, and of his Apostles also before his Resurrection, was the same with that of JOHN's, we have hence great reason to believe that the Baptism administered by them was of the same kind, *viz.* a Baptism founded only upon a repentance and renunciation of their former impiety and rebellion; for that it could not be the Baptism which is truly and properly Christian is evident, because that was not instituted till after the Resurrection of Christ, and there was no other Baptism which could be administered by our Lord's disciples but that of JOHN the Baptist, which I have already shewn to be preparatory to the opening the Gospel Dispensation, and to be intended as a token of its subjects renouncing those corrupt principles, whether human or diabolical, which they had entertained, and which had been productive of a conduct alike vicious and impious: the qualification of repentance therefore required for this Baptism could be nothing more than a divesting themselves of all attachments to that false Religion in which they had been educated, or to which they had voluntarily addicted themselves, that they might not be thereby prejudiced against the reception of those religious doctrines  
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and laws which were to be revealed and instituted by Christ.

Since therefore this renunciation of corrupt principles and attachments in Religion was the only qualification for the Baptism of JOHN, we may hence be enabled to discover what sort of persons could be proper subjects of his Baptism ; and it is evident, that it could be necessary for none but such as had lived in the profession and observance of a false Religion, and Worship, which was to be openly renounced by their submitting to this Baptism ; whereas others, who had continued steadfast in the Faith and Worship of the true God, were esteemed *just persons*, had *no need of Repentance*, nor consequently of that Rite to which it was a preparatory qualification. The Baptism of JOHN must therefore be superseded, and rendered useless in all places where the knowledge and service of the true God is maintained in its purity, and especially where they are exalted to their highest perfection by a regard to those divine discoveries and rules which our Lord has revealed and enjoined concerning them.

It is therefore evident, that all persons who have been educated from their birth in the Faith and Profession of Christianity, must be utterly incapable of JOHN's Baptism, forasmuch as they cannot ordinarily have any religious errors and impieties to renounce, or at least none that have been maintained in opposition to the divine government, and are inconsistent with their submission to it as it is administered by Christ. And if the Baptism of JOHN be incompatible to Adult Christians, it must be much more so to their Infant-offspring, who, it is certain, can have contracted no prejudices against the government of  
God,

God, nor have been guilty of any voluntary opposition to it. So that the Baptism of JOHN, or that of Repentance must be absolutely annulled and rendered useless to us Christians, who have at all times maintained the Faith and Worship of the true God as revealed by his Son Jesus Christ.

Having now sufficiently explained the qualification required for JOHN's Baptism, which was *Repentance towards God*, our next business is to inquire what is comprehended in the qualification for that Baptism which is properly Christian, *viz. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; and as the former appears to consist only in renouncing and abjuring those false and corrupt principles to which those who became his disciples had been attached, and that usurped authority under which they had been thereby subjected, there is good reason to presume, that by the latter there is no more meant and intended than to submit and yeild due allegiance to the government of Christ, and to maintain fidelity to him. The authority with which our blessed Lord was invested for erecting a spiritual and divine government, in opposition to a sensual and diabolical one, required this disposition, and it required no more from those who would subject themselves to it; for as Christ was commissioned to make a new Revelation from God, so he gave full proof of his divine Commission by performing a great number of surprising Miracles, sufficient to convince every unprejudiced person of his authority to exercise a legislative and ruling power in the Kingdom and Church of God; and their conviction and belief of this was all that was necessary to their submission to his government; and as the former Baptism signified a renunciation of all other spiri-  
tual



tual deminion, that of Christ must evidently be designed to require and denote nothing else but a ready subjection to his divine authority.

But in confirmation of what is here assumed from the relation of the Baptism of JOHN to that of Christ, it may perhaps be thought necessary that some account should be given of our blessed Lord's commission and undertaking to establish a Kingdom of a spiritual and divine nature, and of the particular qualifications he required of those whom he intended to admit as subjects and members of it. The former of these demands requires little evidence to be produced in answer to it, for nothing is more plainly asserted in the writings of the New Testament, than the authority and design of Christ to constitute a regal dominion in opposition to that of Satan, which is there called the *Kingdom of God*, and the *Kingdom of Heaven*, in contradistinction to that of the Devil and of darkness; and the destruction of the latter is there declared to be the intent and earnest of the establishment of the former of them; this is what our blessed Lord very plainly intimates to the unbelieving Pharisees. MATTHEW xii. 28. *If I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you.* And it is the Apostle PAUL's declaration, that it was the design of God the Father, in *delivering men from the power of darkness*, that they might be *translated into the Kingdom of his dear Son.* COLOS. i. 13. It would be needless to bring together all those texts wherein a supreme royal authority is ascribed to our Lord, it is sufficient to observe that he himself asserts his right to this Kingdom, as *appointed to him by his Father.* LUKE xxii. 29. and that he lays claim to it in a solemn manner before the Roman Governor, at the same time professing that his *Kingdom*

was not of this world. JOHN xviii. 36, 37. It was a spiritual Kingdom that Christ was to establish, a Kingdom not founded on worldly policy, or supported by human power, but a dominion intended to regulate the moral and religious temper and conduct of mankind.

And not only did our blessed Lord assert and claim a right to this spiritual dominion, but proved his divine designation to it by the Miracles which he wrought, which are sufficient to convince all unprejudiced persons, that he was sent from God with a Commission to administer Government, and to give Laws, of a religious nature, to the world; to produce a conviction of this is what he himself declares to be the intent of performing those miraculous works. *The Works*, says he, *I do in my Father's Name bear witness of me.* JOHN x. 25. v. 36. *The Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* And having thus established his divine authority by the Miracles of his life, and most incontestably confirmed it by his Resurrection from the dead, our Lord, before his Ascension into Heaven to take full possession of his glorious throne, gave a regal Commission to his Apostles, or Ministers of his Kingdom, to admit all who were capable of becoming subjects and members of it, in a solemn manner, by Baptizing them in his Name; this Commission and the authority upon which it is founded are both evidently contained in the declaration by which Christ instituted the Baptismal Ordinance. *All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth, Go ye therefore and disciple all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded*  
*you;*

*you ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* MATTHEW xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

Since the Baptism then which our blessed Lord instituted was grounded upon his divine authority and mission, and was intended only to be a token of subjection to his government, the qualification for this Baptism it is plain can be no more than a ready disposition of mind to submit to his authority, and to yeild a sincere and hearty allegiance and fidelity to him ; and this is what I apprehend to be meant by that Faith which is required by Christ and his Apostles as a necessary disposition to become subjects of his Kingdom, and to be admitted into it by the Baptismal Ordinance. That this Faith could not comprehend a clear and distinct belief of all those doctrines which our Lord intended to reveal, is manifest from their not being preached and discovered till after a very great multitude had been Baptized into the Faith of Christ ; for previous to the Baptism of the Three Thousand, at the time of pouring out the holy Ghost, the Apostles themselves it is plain knew little if any thing of the peculiar doctrines which our Lord was commissioned to reveal, and could not therefore instruct others in the knowledge or belief of them ; and all that these first converts were required to believe was, “ That Jesus had  
 “ approved himself to be a Person authorized by  
 “ God to make known his Will to them, by the  
 “ Miracles he wrought, particularly his raising  
 “ himself from the dead, from whence they  
 “ might with certainty know that God had made  
 “ *the same Jesus both Lord and Christ.*” And as this was a Faith sufficient to qualify them, and so great a number of them for Baptism, it is abundantly evident, that no more than such a Faith

can be necessary to entitle any others to a participation of this Ordinance ; or that all who have a disposition of mind to submit to the authority of Christ have a right to be admitted into his Kingdom by that Baptismal Right which he appointed for this purpose.

But though this instance may, with great justice, be allowed as sufficient to determine the nature of that Faith which is a proper qualification for Christian Baptism, it may not be thought unnecessary to inquire, what is comprehended in the notion of that Faith which our Lord inculcated in his Preaching, and what declaration those who became his followers made of their Faith in him ; and I am persuaded that the strictest examination can discover nothing more to be contained in it, than a persuasion and confession that he was a Person commissioned by God with a legislative and governing authority in his Church ; and that there were predictions of him under this character contained in the Prophecies of the Old Testament, in which he was distinguished by the titles of *the Messiah*, and *the Son of God*. The mention of two or three texts will be deemed a sufficient proof of this.

Thus when NATHANIEL made this confession of his Faith, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel, he of whom Moses and the Prophets did write*. Jesus in his answer to him acknowledges the sufficiency of this to make him a disciple, and owns him as one who did truly believe in him. JOHN i. 45—50. In like manner the declaration which our Lord made to the woman of *Samaria* was no other, than that he was the Messiah. JOHN iv. 26. And the report which she made to her fellow-citizens of her conversation with him concluded with a confession of her



her apprehending him to be *the Christ*. v. 29. And when many of the *Samaritans* believed also, partly on account of the testimony of the woman, and partly by reason of what they themselves heard from his own mouth, they made this profession of their Faith, and this only. *Now we believe and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World*. v. 42. It was a Faith of the same kind with this that was declared by those who were cured of their several diseases by our blessed Lord, as may be seen in many instances, particularly MATTHEW ix. 27, 28, 29. JOHN ix. 35, 38. and MARK x. 47—52. And that it was the design of those Miracles to beget such a Faith only, is what the Apostle JOHN fully and plainly declares. JOHN xx. 30, 31. *Many other Signs truly did Jesus — But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

I shall subjoin but one instance more of the Faith and Confession which our Lord required of his disciples, and this is a fundamental and decisive one, and may be looked upon as a standard fixed by him for the measure of that Faith which is necessary and sufficient to entitle all persons whatsoever to an admission into his Church and Kingdom. The confession I have in view is that which St. PETER made in answer to our blessed Lord's demand of his disciples, *Whom think ye that I am?* And it was no other than this, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* To which declaration Jesus answered and said, *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church.* MATTHEW xvi. 16, 17, 18. It has been made abundantly evident by learned and ingenious writers, that it was not St. PETER's *Person*, though our Lord alludes to the name which he had given him probably upon this account, but the *Rock*,

the *Confession* which he made that he was the Christ \*, one divinely commissioned from God, on which he determined to fix the foundation of his spiritual dominion in the world, and which he laid down as a proper qualification to be required of all those who would become subjects of it, and be entitled to its privileges and blessings.

This text then may justly be considered as our Lord's authoritative determination of the qualifying disposition which he expected in all those who were to be admitted into his Church by the Baptismal Ordinance; and that no other qualification than such a Faith, as was here professed by St. PETER, was required by the Apostles from the Converts to Christianity, may clearly be demonstrated by an examination of the several instances recorded in the ACTS, of such persons as were Baptized with the Baptism of Christ, and of the nature of that Faith which was required of and professed by them for that end; and as these are relations of facts, with all the material circumstances attending them, a careful inquiry into them must put the matter out of all doubt.

The Instance of the Three Thousand converted by the Apostle PETER's first Preaching, and their con-

\* There is here a manifest distinction to be observed between the *Rock* on which the Church was to be built, and the *Foundation* which was to be laid on it, though both are called *Foundations*: the *Rock* was this *Confession*, but the *Foundation* of the Church of Christ were those who first made this *Confession*; for thus the after disciples, or *living stones* of this building, are said to be *built upon the Foundation of the Apostles, and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone.* EPH. ii. 20. And that this is the fundamental doctrine on which the whole building of Christianity is to be raised, and that no other is sufficient or necessary, is also plainly asserted by the Apostle PAUL. 1 COR. iii. 11. *Other Foundation can no man lay then that is laid; which is Jesus Christ.* In 1850, Jesus the Christ.

consequent Baptism as a proof of the sufficiency of a belief of the divine authority of Christ; as a qualification for that Ordinance, has been already quoted, but this proof may, I think, be further illustrated and strengthened by a remark or two which this historical relation offers to our consideration. Nothing can be more obvious to every impartial reader of St. PETER's discourse, than that the belief which he endeavoured to inculcate upon his auditory, was the very same which he himself had before professed to our blessed Saviour, viz. *That he was the Messiah*, a Person who came from God with a regal authority and commission, one who had been foretold by their own Prophets, and expected among them under this character; and one who had abundantly justified his pretensions to this authority by the Miracles which he had wrought, and especially by that surprizing one of his raising himself from the Dead. It is needless to refer to the several parts of St. PETER's Sermon in which these things are asserted, because the whole of it contains nothing more than these assertions interspersed with particular quotations of the Prophecies, wherein these distinguishing characters of the Messiah were foretold.

It is worthy observation also from this history, that St. PETER had the preference given him to all the rest of the Apostles, in his being employed to open the Gospel Dispensation; there were others of them who were not less dear to our blessed Lord upon some account than St. PETER who had been guilty of a shameful denial of him, which we do not find any other of them to have been charged with, and the reason of this distinguishing regard which was paid to him could be no other than the Readiness and Priority of his

acknowledgment of Jesus being the Christ; he was the first of the Apostles who received and believed in him under this character, and was therefore commissioned to be the first Preacher of that Faith, and to lay the Foundation of the Church of Christ which was to be built on it. This privilege was promised to him by our blessed Lord immediately upon his confessing him to be the Messiah, and in a way of a reward for it; for as soon as PETER had made this declaration, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*, and Christ had declared his approbation of it as a proper Foundation on which to build his Church, he presently adds, and *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.* i. e. ‘I appoint thee to be the Person who shall first be employed in the admission of subjects into that Spiritual Constitution which I am about to establish in the world; investing thee with the primary power of Preaching the Gospel of my Kingdom, and entering converts into my Church.’ And this privilege was actually conferred and the power exercised in PETER’s admitting the Three Thousand Jews and Proselytes on the Day of Pentecost, before mentioned, and by which the Kingdom of Heaven was opened to the Jews; and this Commission was again executed in his granting the primary admission of the Gentiles into the Church to which he was called by a double vision, as well as by an express command from God, in a way of manifest preference to all the rest of the Apostles; the visions both of PETER and CORNELIUS, PETER’s Preaching to him and his kinsmen and near friends, which was accompanied with the pouring down of the holy Ghost upon all of them in like manner as before on the Jews, and  
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was immediately followed with their Baptism, are all recorded in the Tenth Chapter of the ACTS.

I have only one remark more to make on this history of the first conversion to Christianity, and that is, that this was done in the presence of all the Apostles, for we are told in the first verse of the chapter, that *they were all with one accord in one Place*; and verse the fourth, that *they were all filled with the holy Ghost*; from whence it is obvious to conclude, that this first Preaching of St. PETER in order to qualify and dispose persons for Baptism, was intended as a pattern for every one of them to follow in making converts, after they were parted one from another in the several districts of their travels, and they had strong encouragement to pursue the same method, from observing what a great number of Souls were brought into the Church of Christ by this single Sermon.

But let us now examine how far this example of St. PETER was imitated by the Apostles, and what that Faith was which was inculcated by their Preaching in the several consequent conversions made by them. We have a good number of these recorded in the book of their Acts; and I am persuaded we shall find, upon the strictest inquiry, that in all the instances there related the Preaching was the same, and the Faith required the same as in this first Discourse; but it will be necessary to consider them distinctly.

The next account then we have of any converts being made was also by the Ministry of St. PETER, and by a Preaching exactly similar to his foregoing Sermon; for having engaged the attention, and excited the wonder of a great multitude of Jews, who were then assembled together in the Temple, by healing a lame man of his infirmity,  
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he takes this occasion to declare unto them, that the Miracle was wrought by a power derived from Jesus, who had been lately crucified among them, but whose innocence and authority God had openly vindicated, by *raising him from the dead, whereof they were witnesses*; and that this was a fact they had abundant reason to give credit to, it being foretold by Moses, and all the Prophets from Samuel, and those that followed after, they themselves being the Children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with their Fathers, saying unto Abraham, *in thy Seed shall all the Kingdoms of the Earth be blessed*. See the whole of the third chapter of the ACTS. This was the substance of PETER's Preaching; and we have an account of the Faith it produced in the fourth verse of the fourth chapter. *Howbeit many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about Five Thousand*. Now what could this Faith be but that which was inculcated in the word which PETER had just before delivered, viz. *that Jesus was the Christ*?

In the fifth chapter, at the fourteenth verse, we are told again, that *Believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*; and that this was effected by the Miracles which the Apostles wrought we learn from the twelfth verse, and as we have no account here of their Preaching, the belief must be such as arose from the conviction begotten by those miraculous works, which could therefore be no other than that of the divine power and authority of Jesus; for this is what they afterwards continued to *preach and teach in the Temple, and in every House, that Jesus was the Christ*, *Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, as may be seen in the last verse of that chapter. In the sixth chapter, after the history of the institution of Deacons, and STEPHEN's being chosen into that office, we are informed that *the*  
number

number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the Priests were obedient to the Faith. ver. 7. and that this conviction was produced chiefly by means of STEPHEN is plainly intimated in the following verses, where it is said, that he was full of Faith and of Power, that he did great Wonders and Miracles among the People, and that they were not able to resist the Wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake; but as there is here no account of the subject of his Preaching, the only judgment we can form of it must be taken from what he said in the subsequent defence of himself before the High Priest and Council; and in this there are but two passages which have any reference to our blessed Lord, one of them is the prophecy of MOSES, that God would raise up a Prophet unto them of their Brethren, like unto himself. chapter vii. ver. 37. the other is that in ver. 52. wherein he declares, that all the succeeding Prophets had shewed before of the coming of the Messiah, (or the just One, as he is here and elsewhere called) of whom they had been the Betrayers and Murderers. To which I shall only add STEPHEN'S declaration after he had closed his discourse, Behold, says he, I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man, or Jesus, as it is in the foregoing verse, standing at the right hand of God. ver. 55, 56. Now all this amounts to no more than that Jesus was foretold as the Messiah by all the Jewish Prophets, and was fully declared to be such by his being now alive after that he had been crucified and slain by them; or, which is the same thing, that he was a Person commissioned by God to reveal his Will to mankind, and impowered to make laws for the government of their moral and religious conduct.

It will easily be observed, that though all the last mentioned Converts are said to have believed, yet there is not any notice taken of their being Baptized ; but as all the Apostles knew this to be an appointment of our blessed Lord, necessary to be observed consequently to the Faith of every one, and as it had been a short time before administered by St. PETER, and the rest of the Apostles, to Three Thousand at once, there can be no reason to think that Baptism was withheld from any of those who are here declared to have believed : but in the next chapter we have some very clear and determinate narrations, which discover what the nature of that Preaching and that Faith was by which converts were made, of their being thereby intitled to Baptism, and having it immediately administered to them ; these conversions were made by the ministry of PHILIP, not the Apostle, but the Evangelist of that name, and they were made at *Samaria*, where but a few years before Jesus himself had convinced a great number of his being the Messiah ; on which account, as I have already shewn, they were declared to believe in him, and this was a good preparation for their embracing the Faith of Christ as inculcated in the Preaching of PHILIP, who declared no other doctrine to them than what our Lord had before delivered, viz. that he was the Christ ; thus we are told verse the fifth, that *he preached Christ unto them, τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, the Christ, or Messiah ; and verse the twelfth, that *he preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus*. i. e. he declared to them the glad tidings of the opening of the Gospel Dispensation, and the authority (for so *Name* may be shewn to signify in several places) of Jesus, as being the supreme Head and Legislator in it ; and to convince them that he was actual ly



tually possessed of this sovereign dominion, PHILIP wrought many Miracles by the power which he derived from him, in consequence of which they not only attended to the things which were spoken by PHILIP, but *believed them, and were* accordingly *Baptized, both Men and Women.*

But amongst these *Samaritan* converts there was one whose case deserves a particular consideration, this was SIMON MAGUS, a person who pretended to supernatural powers, and had deluded the people into a persuasion of his being possessed of them. This man, when he saw the surprising Miracles wrought by PHILIP, we are told, *believed, and was Baptized,* together with the rest: soon after this the Apostles at Jerusalem, hearing that the *Samaritans* had received the Faith of Christ, sent PETER and JOHN to confer on them the gift of the holy Ghost. The bestowing these miraculous powers, by laying on the hands of the Apostles, being seen by SIMON, and perhaps having the same gifts communicated to himself, not being content herewith, but being desirous of having the same power with the Apostles, of conferring those gifts on whomsoever he should think proper, he *offers them money* to prevail with them to convey this power to him. This offer was rejected with the greatest indignation by the Apostles, and he was reprimanded in a very severe manner by St. PETER on account of it. *Thy money,* says he, *perish with thee, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, and thy heart is not right in the sight of God; for I perceive that thou art in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bonds of Iniquity.* verses 20, 21 and 23. Here then we have an instance of a very wicked man believing in Christ, so far as to intitle him to Baptism, one who could have no notion of the true intent and design of Christianity,

stianity, and one who could have no inclination to comply with it had he known it, and yet this man is said *to have believed in Christ*, and was Baptized in consequence of that belief. In what then did his Faith consist? Not in an assent to the divine and spiritual doctrines which Christ revealed, nor in a readiness to comply with those holy and righteous laws which he instituted, but only in a conviction of the superior power and dignity of our Lord, manifested by the Miracles which were wrought in his name; this was the Faith which procured his admission into the Church of Christ by Baptism, and this was the Faith which intitled the other *Samaritans* to it, who heard the same Preaching, and were witnesses to the same Miracles with him. So that there was nothing more required of them than a persuasion of the divine authority of Christ in order to their being entered as subjects of his Kingdom by Baptism.

But this chapter affords another relation of a very eminent and illustrious Convert to the Faith of Christ, a person of very high rank and exalted station in the world, for he was *an Eunuch, of great authority under Candace Queen of the Ethiopians*, being her chief treasurer; and he was a person who was no less distinguished by a ready disposition of soul to entertain divine discoveries than by his honourable advancement; for we are told, that he *was a worshiper of the true God*, though at the head of an heathenish and idolatrous Court, and was so zealous for his honour, that he came from a vast distance to Jerusalem to pay him that solemn service which he required. In his return from thence he employed his time on the road in an inquisitive study of the Jewish Prophets. PHILIP, by divine direction, was ordered to fall in his way, and *join himself to his chariot*, and he

he found him engaged in reading the Prophecy of ISAIAH concerning Christ; upon which he inquired of him, whether he comprehended the meaning of what he was then reading? The Eunuch ingenuously acknowledged his ignorance of it, and that he knew not whether the *Prophet spake of himself or some other person*. His declaring his doubt affords PHILIP an opportunity of shewing him, that the passage on which he was so intent, was a Prophecy that related to Jesus the Messiah, and particularly to his death, and that this had its accomplishment by our Lord's being but a little while before crucified by the Jews.

The Eunuch appears to be immediately convinced by PHILIP's reasoning, that Jesus was this extraordinary Person; and when they came to a stream of water, desired of him that he might be Baptized, and entered into Christ's Religion. This request was immediately granted him, upon his sole confession and declaration, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, i. e. 'I am convinced that Jesus is a Person indowed with divine authority, and the same who was foretold by the Prophets under the character of the Messiah'. This was the substance of the Eunuch's Faith, and this was all which PHILIP instructed him in; for the passage here quoted from ISAIAH, relates only to the death of Christ, though there are other parts of the same chapter which have a further view, in explaining of it therefore he could only acquaint him, that the death and sufferings of Christ, which he must have heard of before at Jerusalem, were events necessary to the accomplishment of the Prophecy concerning him; to which he might probably add the evidence there was for his being risen from the dead; and the belief of this was sufficient to procure the Eunuch

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an admission into the Church of Christ by Baptism; for upon his demand, *What doth hinder me to be Baptized?* PHILIP said unto him, *If thou believest with all thy Heart, thou mayest.* Whereupon, declaring his belief that Jesus was the Christ, *they went down both into the Water, and Philip Baptized him.*

The next Chapter contains the history of the most extraordinary conversion that perhaps was ever made to the Christian Faith, it is that of SAUL, a most outrageous persecutor of the disciples of Jesus, afterwards named PAUL, *called to be an Apostle of Christ*, and distinguished by a most zealous regard for his Religion, and the most unshaken resolution and unweariedness in the promoting of it; and as his conduct, both before and after his conversion, was of a very extraordinary nature, so the manner in which this was effected was very extraordinary and remarkable. He was at that time going to *Damascus* with a Commission from the Jewish High Priest, to apprehend all the followers of Christ he could meet with, and to *bring them in Bonds to Jerusalem*. When he was almost arrived to the end of his journey, both he and those that attended him were surprized by a light from Heaven exceedingly bright and dazling, the lustre of which struck him to the ground, and he heard a voice which proceeded from this glory, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* The astonishment he was in, great as it must be supposed to be, did not hinder him from making this answer, *Who art thou, Lord?* To which he had this reply immediately made him, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* i. e. 'I am that divinely commissioned Person whose authority thou opposest, but it is in vain for  
thee



thee to contend with me, for my power will be too hard for thee, and, if thou persisteth, will be exerted to thy utter confusion'. This amazing light, and these awful words, in an instant subdued the before relentless persecuting spirit of St. PAUL, to a ready subjection to the Faith and Obedience of Christ; for, trembling and astonished, he directly inquires, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Nor did he wait for an answer, for the Lord said unto him, *Arise, and go into the City, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Upon this being led into the City, for he was struck blind by the dazling splendor of the light, a disciple of Christ residing there, called ANANIAS, was directed by a vision to give his attendance upon PAUL, who had also a vision to prepare him for a compliance with the orders of ANANIAS. On his arrival he *laid his Hands on him*, miraculously restored his sight, and gave him a promise of his receiving the holy Ghost, upon which he *forthwith arose, and was Baptized.*

Here then it is manifest there was no revelation of the Doctrines and Rules of the Gospel made to St. PAUL previous to his Baptism, but only a conviction wrought in him of the divine authority of Jesus, whose Religion and Followers he had persecuted: to produce this Faith was the intent of that heavenly light which struck him with amazement to the earth, and for this end our Lord appeared to him in a visible and glorious form \*, that he might demonstrate to him the truth of his

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\* That Jesus appeared personally to St. PAUL at this time is evident from what is said ver. 17 and 27. of this chapter by ANANIAS and BARNABAS, and from the account which PAUL gives of his own conversion. ACTS xxii. 14. and xxvi. 16. To which may be added what he declares to the Corinthians. I CORIN. ix. 1. and xv. 8.

being risen from the dead, and his being exalted to the highest dignity and dominion by the Father ; but he discovered nothing to him, not even when St. PAUL with the greatest humility and fear inquired, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?* Nor did ANANIAS give him any instructions when he came to him, but only confirmed his Faith in the divine authority of Christ by miraculously restoring his sight, and immediately Baptized him. ACTS xxii. 16.

Indeed, in St. PAUL's defence of himself before king AGRIPPA he mentions some other things as declared to him by the Lord at the time of his conversion, but it was only this, that the design of his appearing to him was to qualify him to be a Minister and Witness to the Gentiles, for the propagating his Religion amongst them ; nay, the words directly subjoined afford a plain proof that there were many things yet reserved to be revealed to him afterwards, for it is added, *Thou shalt be a Witness of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee.* ACTS xxvi. 16. Upon the whole then, it is evident that this extraordinary Convert, this eminent Apostle, could have no higher knowledge of Christ than that of his divine authority, nor consequently any superior degree of Faith in him previous to his Baptism.

I cannot pass over the remainder of this chapter without taking notice of *two* accounts we have, at the close of it, of a considerable number of persons who were converted to the Faith of Christ ; both of these conversions were made by the ministration of St. PETER, and both of them by Miracles which he wrought ; the first of them was his healing ENEAS who had kept his Bed Eight Years, sick of the Palsy ; the other was his raising

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TABITHA to life, after she had been some time dead.—The consequence of the former of these Miracles was, that *all who dwelt at Lydda and Saron, and saw the person whose strength was restored, turned unto the Lord*; and that of the later was, that *it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord*. See from the thirty-third verse to the end of the chapter. Now since we have no mention made of any Faith Preached to these converts, the conversions must be attributed to the efficacy of the Miracles wrought; and it is plain that these could produce no other Faith and Conviction than that of the divine power and authority of Christ, in whose Name they were performed.

The history of St. PETER's being sent to convert the Gentiles, and admit them into the Church of Christ, fills up the tenth chapter. I have already taken notice of the preference given to PETER above the other Apostles, in his being intrusted with the power of the Keys, and his being commissioned to open the Church of Christ both to Jews and Gentiles; the manner in which he executed this, with regard to the first of them, has been considered above, and a view of the narration now before us will be sufficient to convince us, that the admission of the Gentiles was performed in the same way, and by the same means, as well as by the same person.

It would be needless here to rehearse the several steps by which the Apostle and the devout converts were brought together; these being of a miraculous nature not only removed PETER's aversion to communicate the Faith of Christ to the Heathens, but prepared them for a ready entertainment of those truths which he discovered. To the consideration of these I shall therefore confine myself,

myself, and shall only take notice of what he Preached to them on this occasion. Of this we have an account from the thirty-sixth to the forty-fourth verse, and the substance of it is, That *Jesus was the Christ, and Lord of all; that God was with him*; that he was invested with this divine authority by his being *anointed with the holy Ghost*, and having the *Power* of the Spirit of God conferred upon him; that he had abundantly proved his being possessed of this authority and power by the miraculous cures which he performed, of which he and the other Apostles were witnesses; that after he had been *crucified and slain* by the Jews, *God raised him up on the third Day, and shewed him openly* to a very considerable number of witnesses, who were ready to give an unquestionably faithful testimony to the truth of it; and that they, the Apostles, had received a Commandment from God, to declare that the final judgment of all mankind was committed to him.

Now all this is no more than an assertion and proof of the divine Commission and Appointment of Christ to be supreme Lord and head of the Kingdom and Church of God; and the Arguments which the Apostle makes use of for this end, are the very same with those which he had before urged to the Jews at the first conversion. Indeed, the last mentioned branch of our Lord's authority here specified, viz. that of his being *ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead*, or his having a judicial and remunerative power conferred on him, as well as a legislative one, may be thought to be somewhat more than had been before declared to any converts; but I think this is also supposed, wherever the kingly authority of Christ is asserted, as it is wherever he is declared to be the Messiah; and it is plainly implied in what St.

PETER



PETER adds at the close of his first Sermon, that Christ was exalted at the *right hand of God*, and was to *sit there till he had made all his Foes his Footstool*. This is what PETER Preached unto the Gentiles, and this Preaching produced in them such a proper degree of Faith in Christ, that *the holy Ghost immediately fell on all that heard him*. This being an abundant proof of the validity of their Faith, PETER makes this demand of those that accompanied him, *Can any man forbid Water, that these should not be Baptized, who have received the holy Ghost as well, and in the same manner, as we at our first conversion? And then he directly commands them to be Baptized in the Name of the Lord.*

The eleventh chapter contains but one instance of an addition to the number of Believers which was made at ANTIOCH, and it was effected by the Preaching of some disciples, who had fled from JERUSALEM on account of the Persecution which arose about STEPHEN. After passing through other places they arrived at ANTIOCH, and there we are told they *spoke unto the Grecians, Preaching the Lord Jesus; and that the Hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.* ver. 20, 21. The Faith here inculcated then was no other than that Jesus was the Lord, and it was conferred by Miracles wrought by a power derived from him, insomuch as to convince them that Christ was indowed with a divine authority from Heaven.

There is no account in the following chapter of any converts being made to the Christian Faith, but the thirteenth affords several instances of such. The first there mentioned is that of SERGIUS PAULUS, a man of high rank, being the Deputy or Proconsul of the Island of CYPRUS, who having

heard the extraordinary character and works of PAUL and BARNABAS, and being a *prudent man, and σωφρονης*, a person of good understanding and disposition, sent for them, and *desired to hear the word* which they Preached; in this they were opposed by BAR-JESUS, a *false Prophet* and a *Sorcerer*, on which account he was also called ELYMAS; but PAUL perceiving his endeavours to hinder the Deputy from imbracing the Faith, determines, by working a Miracle at once, to awaken the Sorcerer to a sense of his wickedness, and to convince the Proconsul that a divine power attended him. Having therefore first reprimanded ELYMAS with just severity, and threatened him with an awful judgment, he immediately inflicts it on him, striking him with blindness, so that *there fell on him a Mist and Darkness*, and *he went about seeking some to lead him by the Hand*. This Miracle wrought in the presence of the Deputy had its proper effect upon him; for when he saw what was done, we are told he *believed, being astonished at the Doctrine of the Lord*; so that his Faith was plainly founded on the Miracle which had been wrought before him, and consisted in nothing else but a conviction, that Jesus whom PAUL Preached was a Person divinely commissioned from above; and this is all that is meant by the *Doctrine of the Lord*, verse the twelfth, as may be seen by comparing ACTS V. 28. with the following verses.

The next instance of a Conversion recorded in this chapter, was made at ANTIOCH in PISIDIA, where PAUL *entering into the Synagogue on the Sabbath-Day*, was permitted by the Rulers of it to Preach the Faith of Christ to the Congregation assembled; and as this was made up chiefly of Jews and religious profelytes, he begins his discourse with a recital of the gracious dispensations of God  
towards

towards them as his People. Having brought down his account so far as the Reign of DAVID, he takes occasion from thence to put them in mind of the Promise which God had made by the Prophets of a Prince descended from him, whose Government should be of an everlasting duration; and then tells them that Jesus was this very Person, who upon that account was eminently called *the Son of David*, and *Messiah the Prince*: in proof that Jesus was really this extraordinary Person, he alledges the testimony of JOHN the Baptist, who positively declared him to be such to the Jews; but notwithstanding this declaration, and the predictions which the Prophets had before delivered concerning Christ, they through ignorance *fulfilled them* by putting him to death; however, this did not put a period to the authority of Jesus, but was a means of establishing it, for *God raised him from the dead*, of which there were many witnesses, who afterwards saw and conversed with him; and this Resurrection of Christ he tells them was also foretold and promised, particularly to DAVID, which he proves from the second and sixteenth Psalm.

The Apostle then appeals to them for the reasonableness of their Faith in Christ, and encourages them to it, by assuring them that in consequence of it, they would receive *the forgiveness of their former Sins*, and would be deemed righteous before God in such a manner, as they could not have been by their observance of the *Law of Moses*; and then he concludes his Discourse with cautioning them against fulfilling some other Prophecies by a wilful and obstinate unbelief. What the effect of all this Discourse was we are told in the forty-second and forty-third verses, viz. *That the Gentiles besought that these words might be Preached to them the next Sabbath-Day; and that many of the*

*Jews and religious Profelytes immediately followed Paul and Barnabas.* It is evident then, that the whole of this speech of St. PAUL has the very same design with those which were delivered by PETER in his several successful attempts to bring over Converts to the Faith of Christ, and that the belief inculcated herein is nothing else but that of our Lord's divine Authority and Commission.

The only remaining Conversion related in this chapter was the effect and consequence of the foregoing Preaching, or at least a repetition of it, in compliance with the request which the Gentiles had made the preceding Sabbath; and we are told, that *almost the whole City assembled to hear it.* This was a sight extremely offensive to the envious Jews, and occasioned their contradicting St. PAUL in a reproachful and opprobrious manner; upon which PAUL and BARNABAS were animated with a sufficient degree of resolution to inform them, that as by the appointment of God they had first Preached the Gospel to them, but they by rejecting it had discovered an indisposedness to partake of that Eternal Life which it offered, they were now determined to turn their views and labours to the conversion of the Gentiles, to which they were encouraged by a divine prediction and promise of success: when the Gentiles heard this we are told, *they were glad*, and expressed their high approbation of the words which had been spoken to them, and that *as many of them as were disposed to receive the offers of Eternal Life, proposed in the Gospel, believed.* So that as the Preaching was the same, their Faith must be the same, as it was shewn to be in the foregoing instance.

In the first verse of the fourteenth chapter we are informed, that the Apostle being removed to ICONIUM, *went into the Synagogue of the Jews,*  
and



and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and Greeks believed; what the subject of their Preaching was is not mentioned; whatever it was we are acquainted in the third verse, *that the Lord gave testimony to it, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their hands*; from whence it appears that their Preaching, as well as their Miracles, was intended to beget a conviction of the divine power and authority of Jesus, and that this was the whole of the Faith wrought by them. At the twenty-first verse of this chapter we are told, that the Apostles *preached the Gospel at DERBE, and taught, or disciplined many, μαθητεύσαντες πολλούς*, making such as were well disposed disciples; but on what topicks they Preached is not said, only that it was the Gospel, which in other places signifies the glad Tidings of the Messiah, and Salvation by him. This was what they taught, and this was what those who became disciples believed.

We have no further account of any addition to the number of Believers in the remainder of this, or in the next chapter, but the sixteenth supplies us with *two* instances which deserve to be considered. The first there recorded is that of LYDIA, an inhabitant of PHILIPPI, a *worshiper of the true God*, and a constant attendant at a place appropriated to that purpose nigh to the City; to this Proseucha St. PAUL repaired with his Companions, and spake to the women who were assembled there; LYDIA, being one of the number, was greatly affected with St. PAUL's Discourse, insomuch that he thought her duely qualified to become a disciple of Christ, and accordingly admitted her as such by *Baptizing both her and her Household*. Here we have no account of the subject of PAUL's Preaching, but the manner in which LYDIA's Conversion is expressed, clearly shews that it consisted in

no more than a readiness of mind to receive instruction from the Apostles, as the divinely commissioned Servants of Christ, whose authority they asserted, for it is said, that *the Lord opened her Heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul*; and that after her Baptism, she requested him to *come unto her House and abide there*, doubtless with a view to receive further instructions from him. Verses 14 and 15. of this chapter.

The other Conversion related in this chapter is that of the Jailer, to whose custody PAUL and SILAS were committed by order of the Magistrates of the City of PHILIPPI; and it was effected in this manner. *At Midnight while they were praying and praising God, in the Prison where they were confined, there was suddenly a great Earthquake, so that the Foundations of the Prison were shaken, the Doors of it opened, and all the Prisoners Bands were loosed.* The Jailer being awakened by the concussion, and finding *the Prison Doors open*, was about to kill himself to avoid the consequences he apprehended from such a disaster. This design being discovered by St. PAUL, he immediately interposes to prevent it, by informing him with a loud voice, that the Prisoners were all safe. The Jailer now convinced that the whole affair was miraculous, and knowing that PAUL and SILAS were committed to his custody, on account of their Preaching the way of Salvation by Christ, with great earnestness applied himself to them, saying, *Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?* To which inquiry they directly answered, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and thou shalt be saved, and thy House.* And when they had spoken to them *the Word of the Lord, the same Hour of the Night*; we are told, that *he and all his were Baptized*, and that *he believed in the Lord with all his House.* The Word of the Lord here  
Preached,

Preached was evidently no other than that which is mentioned in the foregoing verse, that *the Lord Jesus was the Christ*, or a Person invested with an authoritative Commission from God ; and in this sense the same Phrase is used ACTS x. 36, 37. xi. 1, 19, 20. This was all the Doctrine which the Apostle taught him, and this was all which he required him to believe, in order to his being admitted into the Church of Christ by the Baptismal Ordinance.

The seventeenth chapter begins with an account of a great number of Converts to the Christian Faith made at THESSALONICA. PAUL, according to his usual custom, *entered into the Synagogue of the Jews*, which was in that City, and for three successive Sabbath-Days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, proving from thence that it was appointed and foretold that *the Messiah should suffer, or die, and rise again from the Dead ; and that Jesus*, in whom these Predictions were known to be fulfilled, must therefore be *the Christ*. Some of the Jews who heard the Apostle's Preaching we are told *believed*, but a much greater number of the *devout Greeks*, among whom there were many Women of Rank and Distinction. And what did they believe ? It must be that, and that only, which PAUL had been Preaching to them, *that Jesus was the Christ*.

The Apostle, with his companion SILAS, being driven from THESSALONICA by a Persecution raised through envy of the unbelieving Jews, traveled to BEREIA, and there also entered into the Jewish Synagogue, where it is evident that he Preached the same Word as he had before done at THESSALONICA, viz. that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied of in their Scriptures ; this doctrine we are told they received with great readiness of mind, and made a strict  
search

search into the sacred Writings, carefully examining whether those things were so spoken of there, as they had been represented by St. PAUL ; upon which we are informed that *many of the Jews believed*, besides a considerable number of Gentiles, both men and women, who were persons of note and figure amongst them. So that here also their Belief could include no more than what had been inculcated by the Apostle, and what by their own study and examination of the Scriptures they were convinced of, *that Jesus was the Christ*.

The malice of the Jews not suffering PAUL to remain quiet at this place neither, he departed privately to ATHENS, a City whose inhabitants were renowned for their superior wisdom, but were notwithstanding extremely given to Idolatry ; here the Apostle takes all opportunities for propagating the Gospel amongst them, *Preaching to them Jesus and the Resurrection*, first in the Jewish Synagogue, then in the Markets and other Places of publick concourse : while he was thus employed some of the *Epicurean* and *Stoick* Philosophers met with him, and brought him before the Assembly of the *Areopagites*, a Court of supreme authority in the Athenian State. Here they required him to declare, what that new Doctrine was which he had Preached in the City ; PAUL taking occasion from an *Inscription* which he had seen *on an Altar* there, dedicated *to the Unknown God*, insinuates thence the knowledge of the true God hitherto unknown to them. This God he tells them is the Maker of the World, and all things therein, the supreme Governor of Heaven and Earth, Immense as to his Essence, universally beneficent as to his Providence, but more especially distinguished by the endearing character of his being the Father of Mankind ; from hence the Apostle shews them  
how



how absurd it was that such rational creatures, as are the *Offspring of God* in a peculiar manner, should endeavour to represent him by Images of their own Invention and Formation ; this he tells them was the effect of *their Ignorance*, which God had indeed hitherto let pass without exemplary notice, but henceforth all mankind were laid under the strongest obligation *to repent* of their former Idolatry and Wickedness, because God had given a Commission to his Son Jesus to call them to an account at the final Judgment ; which authority he was sufficiently proved to be possessed of, by *his being raised from the Dead*.

The first part of this Discourse of the Apostle, as far as he inforces the belief of the only true God, his Perfections and Providence, seems to have been heard with attention and candour by them ; but when they were told of the Resurrection of the Dead, some of them, probably the *Epicureans*, derided him ; others, who may be supposed to be of the Sect of the *Stoicks*, said, *We will hear thee again of this matter* : but notwithstanding St. PAUL's arguments were received either with scorn or doubting by the Philosophers, they were effectual to the producing of Faith in some persons of eminence in that City, for we are told that *certain Men clave unto him, and believed, among whom was Dionysius, one of the Judges of the supreme Court of Areopagus, and a Woman named Damaris, and others with them*. Now the nature of their Faith may be easily discovered from the design of the Apostles Preaching, which was to convince them of the Perfections and Providence of the only true God, the absurdity of their idolatrous worship, and then to lead them to an acknowledgment of the divine authority of Christ, in his designation to be the Lord and Judge of all Mankind;

kind ; *i. e.* to induce them to believe in the *only true God, and in Jesus Christ whom he had sent.*

Some time after this we are informed, that PAUL departed from ATHENS and came to CORINTH ; during his stay in this City, *he Reasoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath, perswading the Jews and the Greeks that Jesus was the Christ.* Here again the Jews were offended, and opposed him with opprobrious language, which obliged him to desist from Preaching to them, and apply himself to the Conversion of the Gentiles in that City ; with this intent PAUL took up his residence in the house of one JUSTUS, a devout Greek, where he became successful in converting not only many of the Corinthians, but with them CRISPUS also, *the chief Ruler of the Synagogue, who believed on the Lord with all his House, and were all Baptized.* So that the Faith of these Converts was this only, *that Jesus was Lord or Christ,* for this was what PAUL testified in the Synagogue, and what the Corinthians hearing believed. Compare verses 4th and 5th with the 7th of this chapter.

No other instance of a Conversion occurs till we come to the end of this 18th chapter, and this, if it was any thing more than a confirming the disciples in the Faith, as seems to be intimated in the 27th verse, was made at CORINTH, where PAUL had before converted many, and it was effected by the Ministry of APOLLOS ; this man was by Nation a Jew, one of great eloquence and very well versed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, herein he had clearly discovered many Prophecies of the Messiah, and of his appearance about that time, on account of which he had been Baptized into the expectation of Christ by JOHN's Baptism : AQUILA and PRISCILLA, who were Jewish Converts, meeting with him at EPHESUS, and hearing him

him preach things concerning the coming of the Messiah, with great readiness acquainted him with his actual appearance, and that Jesus was that very Person; APOLLOS being thoroughly convinced of this left them to pursue the work of Conversion there, and went himself to CORINTH, where we are told, that *he mightily convinced the Jews, shewing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ*. This was the Faith which they either then received or were established in, that Jesus was a Person endowed with divine authority, and the very same who was described in their Scriptures under the character of the Messiah.

I know not whether what is mentioned in the begining of the 19th chapter, concerning the Twelve Disciples at EPHESUS, will be deemed a fresh Conversion any more than that contained in the foregoing account; however, I think it deserves a brief examination. It is thus related. When PAUL, having passed through other parts, *came to Ephesus and found some disciples there*, he inquired of them, whether *they had received the holy Ghost*, to which they answered, that they had not heard of any gifts of the holy Ghost being conferred on the disciples. The Apostle with some surprize puts this further question to them, *Unto what then were ye Baptized? And they said unto John's Baptism*. PAUL upon this discovery declares to them, that the Baptism of JOHN was only a preparatory one, a Baptism of Repentance for their former errors and sins; for at the same time that he baptized any, he exhorted them to a Belief in a much superior Person *who should come after him*, and this St. PAUL tells them was *Jesus who is the Christ*. When they heard this, we are told, *they were Baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus*. It is probable that the persons here spoken  
of

of were instructed by APOLLOS while he was at EPHEBUS, and *knew only the Baptism of John*; they are indeed called disciples, but this is no other title than what many were distinguished by who had been only Baptized with JOHN's Baptism; and knew nothing of Jesus being the Christ, as may be seen in a great number of instances in the Gospel; and this seems to be the case of the disciples at EPHEBUS, for PAUL tells them, that it was the design of JOHN's Preaching to lead his hearers to a belief of the Messiah, who was about to appear; and then having convinced them, that Jesus was the Christ, he Baptizeth them in his Name, and bestows on them the gifts of the holy Ghost; so that in this, as well as in the preceding cases, all the Faith required, as necessary to Baptism, was, that Jesus was the Christ.

The Apostle tarried at EPHEBUS more than two years after this, imploying great part of his time in a laborious application to the making Converts among them; at the begining of his residence there, he *went into the Synagogue* of the Jews and *spake boldly*, reasoning and *perswading the things concerning the Kingdom of God*: but here he met with little success, for a great number of the Jews *were hardened and believed not*, but spake reproachfully of Christ and his Religion before the People; this obliged PAUL to leave them, and having separated the disciples he had made from the unbelievers, he reasoned daily in a publick School belonging to one TYRANNUS; this gave both Jews and Greeks an opportunity of hearing the Word of the Lord Jesus, the truth of which was confirmed by many special Miracles which God wrought by the Apostle's hands; so that by these means a very considerable number of both these sorts of persons were converted and believed, and  
the



the word of God grew mightily and prevailed. Now all that PAUL taught them was nothing else but the things concerning the *Kingdom of God*, and the *Word of the Lord Jesus*, which Phrases have been already shewn to denote the divine Commission and Authority of our blessed Saviour.

The only remaining account in the Acts of the Apostles of any converts being made to the Faith of Christ, is contained in the last chapter of this history; this was done at ROME where PAUL was brought a prisoner, but having leave to reside in a house which he hired, a few days after his arrival he called together the chief of the Jews who were in that City, and having given them a short relation of the occasion of his imprisonment, they requested of him that he would let them know what doctrine he taught, and what were the tenets of his Sect which every where met with so much opposition: having fixed a day for this purpose, a large number of Jews assembled at his lodging to hear what he had to say, to whom we are told *he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God*, or the Messiah, perswading them to believe that Jesus was the Person, by arguments taken from the Law of MOSES, and the succeeding Prophets. The consequence of this Preaching was, that *some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not*. In this case therefore it is plain, that all the Faith which the Apostle inculcated was that of Jesus being the Christ, which he made evident to many of them by arguments drawn from their own Scriptures.

Thus I have carefully and impartially examined all the accounts I can meet with in the history of the Acts of the Apostles of any persons being converted to the Christian Faith, and I believe upon the nicest scrutiny it will appear, that all

the Faith to which they were converted, and by which they were intitled to the Name of Believers, and to an Admission into the Christian Church by Baptism, was no more than a conviction of the divine authority of the Lord Jesus; this is what the Apostles Preached, what their hearers Believed, and into this they were Baptized.

Perhaps it may be here said, “ That though  
 “ this is all that is recorded of the Apostles  
 “ Preaching, there can be no certain proof de-  
 “ rived from hence, that they delivered no more  
 “ than this to those whom they endeavoured to  
 “ make converts of, for they might possibly  
 “ make further discoveries of the Doctrines and  
 “ Duties of Christianity, which the conciseness  
 “ of the Apostolick history would not admit  
 “ a relation of; and there seems to be good  
 “ ground for such a supposition, from what is  
 “ said at the close of St. PETER’s first Sermon,  
 “ that *with many other words he testified and ex-*  
 “ *horted them, saying, save yourselves from this un-*  
 “ *toward Generation.* Now this may be the case  
 “ in other Discourses of the Apostles, and it must  
 “ therefore remain doubtful, whether a Faith in  
 “ the divine authority of Christ was all that  
 “ was demanded by them as a qualification for  
 “ Baptism.”

To this I answer, by allowing that the Apostles did give further instructions to those whom they converted, not indeed previous to but consequent upon their Baptism; for according to our blessed Lord’s Commission to his Apostles, they were first to be initiated into his Religion by Baptism, and afterwards to be taught its distinguishing tenets and injunctions; and the Historian’s account of their proceeding evidently discovers this to be their practice, as in all his relations

relations of the Conversions they made he mentions nothing more than their demanding a belief in Christ as a divine Teacher, and it must be absurd to suppose that he should omit any thing necessary to qualify them for an admission into the Christian Church, at the same time that he is giving us a history of these Conversions and the methods by which they were made. All the arguments indeed by which the Apostles endeavoured to beget this Faith in their hearers may not be related, but the Faith itself must be described by this inspired Writer, otherwise his narrations must be exceedingly imperfect, if not utterly impertinent. When St. PETER therefore is said to have *testified and exhorted his hearers with many other words*, it is plain they were only such as were intended to shew them the reasonableness of their believing in Christ, and the danger of their rejecting him, and thereby bring them to a speedy and effectual resolution to *save themselves from that perverse and wicked Generation*. The Historian's meaning is not that there were any additional Doctrines, which he had omitted to mention, delivered to them, but only that they were further perswaded and exhorted by an awful representation of their wretched and dangerous state to imbrace that Faith which he had before Preached as necessary to their escaping it, and putting themselves into the way of Salvation by Christ.

As there is no instance then to be produced wherein any thing more than a belief in the divine authority of Christ is required, as necessary to an admission into his Church, it is evident, I think, that this Faith alone is a sufficient qualification for Christian Baptism: had there been but

one precedent of this kind which had no peculiar circumstance attending it, I know not why it would not have justified the admission of others upon the same terms in all similar cases ; how much more then must the concurrence of all the instances of Conversions which we have any account of, in which there is no more than such a Faith inculcated or demanded, be a demonstrative proof of its being not merely sufficient for, but of its giving an absolute title to Baptism ; for if a belief in the divine mission of Christ was not a proper qualification for an admission into his Church, the Apostles must be extremely faulty in their requiring nothing further, but if they who were enlightened and directed by the holy Spirit of God, in a distinguishing manner, allowed its sufficiency for this end, it must be very great arrogance in others to demand any thing further.

This then being the only qualification required for Baptism, let us next inquire, “ With what “ view it was appointed, and what may be supposed to be included in it ”. And I think nothing can be more evident than that the intent of requiring this degree of Faith and no more was, that those who embraced the Religion of Jesus might be disposed to entertain those Doctrines and Laws which were delivered by him under the sanction of that divine authority which he claimed and they acknowledged ; and wherever there was such a readiness of mind, nothing else could be necessary to their admission into the Kingdom and Church of Christ, or to entitle them to become his disciples and subjects. . All therefore that is included in this Faith which qualifies for Baptism can be only a proper disposed-  
ness



ness of heart to assent to the divine Truths and obey the religious Precepts which our Saviour promulged by Revelation from God.

The next inquiry we are led to is, “ Who are “ the most proper Subjects of Baptism in these “ later ages of the Gospel Dispensation ? ” Now besides those few persons who may chance to be converted to Christianity from Judaism, Mahometism, or Heathenism, I suppose it will be readily allowed, that the descendants of Christians by profession, who have themselves been admitted into the Christian Covenant by this Ordinance, may fairly be presumed to have a due qualification for it. The matter is without all doubt with regard to those who have received and firmly adhered to a religious Education and Instruction from their Parents, or others, in the Knowledge and Faith of Christ ; or such who have been taught, and accordingly believe him to be a Person invested with divine authority, whose Doctrines they are for this reason obliged to give credit to, and whose Laws they are bound to obey ; for this has been shewn to be all that was required by the Apostles of the first Christians ; and being in such a state, they must not only be deemed free from those prepossessions and prejudices against the authority of Christ, which the primitive disciples were embarrassed with, but their early attachment to him as their Lord and Lawgiver (if no contrary principles be imbibed) must become so firmly rooted as to be abundantly productive of loyalty and obedience to him.

But it may be here said, “ That in the present age, wherein Infidelity, Scepticism and “ Immorality have a growing prevalency, there “ is great danger of unsteady Youth being alienated from the Faith of Christ, prejudiced against

“ his authority, and indisposed to his obedience,  
 “ by the time that they arrive to ripeness of un-  
 “ derstanding, and then may thereby be disquali-  
 “ fied for the Baptismal Institution. A vocal  
 “ Profession of Faith in Christ is not in itself suf-  
 “ ficient for this purpose, for in many cases there  
 “ may be reason to doubt of the sincerity of it,  
 “ and much greater reason now than in the times  
 “ of the Apostles, since a variety of worldly views  
 “ and advantages now concur as inducements to  
 “ persons to enter themselves into the Church of  
 “ Christ, all which in the first ages ran counter to  
 “ the Profession of Christianity, as it could not  
 “ be then made without an expectation of many  
 “ temporal losses and severe persecutions on ac-  
 “ count of it. And if in those days, such as were  
 “ divinely inspired could be deceived and imposed  
 “ upon as to the truth and reality of that Faith  
 “ which was professed to them, as they were in  
 “ the case of SIMON MAGUS, much more may the  
 “ present Administrators of Baptism be mistaken  
 “ in the sincerity of those who offer themselves as  
 “ Candidates for that Ordinance”.

Now all this I am ready to allow, not only  
 with regard to those who are at this time convert-  
 ed from other Religions, but those also who have  
 been bred up from their Birth in Christian Na-  
 tions, and have not been initiated into the Church  
 of Christ before their arrival to years of Maturity.  
 Without the knowledge of the heart, which is  
 the peculiar prerogative of the all-wise God, it is  
 impossible that the most penetrating and cautious  
 among the Ministers of Christ should discern the  
 Principles and Ends which engage persons to offer  
 themselves to Baptism, and be certain that they  
 have such a readiness of mind to receive and com-  
 ply with those Rules and Instructions of Christ, as  
 is

is made a necessary qualification for partaking of it.

The Baptism of Adult Believers in Countries where Christianity is established by Law, and has many temporal advantages annexed to the profession of it, must therefore be administered with great uncertainty whether the Subjects of it are fit for its reception : but though there is so great a hazard in Baptizing those that are grown up to ripeness of understanding, without their having a due measure of Faith, or readiness of mind to entertain and comply with the Discoveries and Injunctions of Christ, there are other Subjects of this Ordinance of whom there is not the least room to doubt that they are in all respects qualified and disposed for it, and they are the Descendants of Christians, while they are in a state of Infancy and Childhood. Under the foregoing Proposition, I think, I have sufficiently proved their right to it, and wherever there is a title to a privilege conferred by God, there must certainly be a proper disposedness to partake of that privilege. The qualification for Baptism has now been shewn to be no more than a readiness to receive those divine Truths and Instructions which are revealed by Christ, and that *Infants* have this disposition of mind is what both Reason and Revelation concur in the proof of.

The dictates of Reason as to this matter have been already considered under the first Proposition, and nothing I think can be more evident than what is there asserted, that as they are intellectual and moral creatures of God, and derive both their Bodies and Spirits from him, they cannot be formed by him with any disqualifications for those religious purposes for which they are by their nature designed, but must have a proper disposedness to

receive such divine Instructions as are necessary to form them to an holy and religious temper, and enable them to answer the important ends of their creation. A slight observation of the disposition of *Infants* will be sufficient to discover in them such a tenderness and docility of mind as is the best foundation for Instruction and Discipline; and it is certain that they can have no prejudices to render them averse to entertaining and believing the great Truths of the Gospel when they are taught them; and that they are much easier to be directed to a conformity to its holy Precepts than grown persons, who have more or less lived in a course of sin and disobedience. Innocence, Humility, and Teachableness, are the distinguishing Characteristics of their Infant-Age, these they are possessed of in a much higher degree than any who are more advanced in years, and these are the proper dispositions which qualify for Christian Baptism. What then should hinder them from being Baptized?

This is what natural Reason urges in favour of the qualifications of *Infants* for Baptism, and it is abundantly confirmed by the account given of their temper and disposition in the Gospel of Christ; for proof of this I shall only refer you to the declarations of our Lord himself concerning the fitness of Children to be admitted into his Church and Kingdom in their early time of life. MATTHEW xix. 14. MARK x. 14. and LUKE xviii. 16. *Suffer Little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, των γαρ τοιουτων εστιν η βασιλεια των ουρανων.* i. e. ‘ These and such as these are the only proper  
‘ subjects of that spiritual Kingdom which I am  
‘ about to establish in the world; and all who  
‘ have like dispositions with those Infants are duly  
‘ qualified



‘ qualified to become Members of my Church,  
 ‘ and can upon no other Terms be admitted  
 ‘ into it’.

This is yet more fully asserted by our blessed Saviour MATTHEW xviii. 1—4. Upon occasion of the disciples inquiry, who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, *Jesus called a Little Child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as Little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself, (ταπεινωσιν εαυτον, shall become submissive and tractable, for the word has sometimes this signification) as this Little Child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* i. e. ‘ If you want to  
 ‘ know who have the best qualifications for be-  
 ‘ coming my disciples and subjects of my King-  
 ‘ dom, look upon this Little Child, and behold in  
 ‘ him a temper in all respects fited for subjection  
 ‘ to my Government, a disposition which, unless  
 ‘ you yourselves are in a good degree converted to,  
 ‘ you cannot possibly be admitted into my Church ;  
 ‘ and whoever among you shall attain to an equal  
 ‘ obsequiousness of mind with this Little Child, I  
 ‘ will esteem him, and he will really be the most  
 ‘ deserving subject of that Kingdom which I  
 ‘ establish’. There is another text in which our blessed Lord repeats this assertion with no less precision and energy. MARK x. 15. LUKE xviii. 17. *Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a Little Child, he shall not enter therein.* i. e. ‘ Assure yourselves, that whosoever  
 ‘ does not bring with him a mind alike harmless,  
 ‘ unprejudiced, and tractable with that of a Little  
 ‘ Child, is not fit, neither shall be admitted to  
 ‘ become one of my disciples, or a subject of my  
 ‘ Kingdom’.

From

From every one of these last quoted texts it is abundantly evident, that Infants have the most proper qualifications for an admission into the Kingdom and Church of Christ, for that this is the meaning of the Phrases, *Kingdom of God*, and *Kingdom of Heaven*, has been already shewn, viz. a dominion under Christ commencing in Grace, established by Holiness, and perfected in Glory; of this Government *Infants* are allowed to be proper subjects, of such it is declared to consist, they are qualified to receive it, and none but such as become like them in simplicity and purity can be admitted into it; this is what our blessed Saviour declares of the qualifications of *Little Ones* for a reception into his Kingdom; and of his readiness to receive them into it he gives a yet further proof, by *his taking them into his Arms*, and *Blessing them*, thereby allowing them to be objects of his gracious regard, and asserting their capacity to receive those Influences, and be made partakers of those Privileges which belong to every true Member of the Church of Christ.

Should it be here said, “That if it was the intention of our blessed Lord to declare the right and capacity of *Infants* for an admission into his Church by this token of his regard to them, it seems strange that he did not at the same time Baptize them; which, had he approved of their Baptism, he might have done with as much ease as giving them his solemn Benediction”. It will be a sufficient answer, that *Jesus did not Baptize any, but his Disciples* did it. JOHN IV. 21. Should the Question be again put, “Why then did he not order his Disciples to Baptize them”? To this it may be replied, that they only Baptized persons with the Baptism of *Repentance* as JOHN did, which those innocent Children, by our Saviour’s

viour's own account of them, could have no need of; but that the Baptism which is truly Christian, was not ordained or practised till it was instituted by our blessed Saviour after his Resurrection, and therefore no kind of Baptism could possibly be administered to *Infants* at the time when Christ manifested these distinguishing favours to them.

I am apprehensive it may be yet urged, " That  
 " whatever deserving qualifications *Infants* are  
 " possessed of, yet there is one which, by reason  
 " of their want of understanding, they must be  
 " absolutely incapacitated for, and that is *Believing*  
 " *in Christ*, and this must be indispensably neces-  
 " sary to Baptism, because it was required by him  
 " as the condition of it, and was demanded by  
 " the Apostles from all, previous to their admi-  
 " nistration of it". To this I answer, that *Infants*  
 have this qualification also in as high a degree  
 as is necessary to their being Baptized, for they  
 have the same disposition of mind which was re-  
 quired by Christ and his Apostles in order to Bap-  
 tism, and the very same disposition to which they  
 gave the denomination of *Faith in him*; for they  
 have all that readiness of mind to submit to the  
 authority, and receive the instructions of our blessed  
 Lord, which was ever demanded of any who were  
 Baptized into his Name and Religion. I may  
 therefore presume to say, that *Infants* do really  
 believe in Christ; and I say it with confidence, be-  
 cause our Lord himself hath said it. MATTHEW  
 xviii. 6. *Whosoever shall offend one of these Little Ones*  
*who believe in me, it were better that a Millstone was*  
*hanged about his neck, and that he was drowned in*  
*the depth of the Sea.*

It has not escaped my observation, that this text  
 has been generally interpreted by the Learned as  
 only relating to such Adult Persons who have like  
 dispositions

dispositions with Little Children, joined with a capacity of openly acknowledging Jesus to be the Messiah, or a Person invested with divine authority ; but for what reason its meaning should be restrained to such, I cannot by any means discern : to me it seems absurd, I speak it with all due deference, to suppose that our Saviour should give the title of *Little Ones* to all who become his disciples, or are qualified to be so ; that he should derive this appellation from those who were *Little Ones* as to age ; that he should own and distinguish them as the most worthy subjects of his Kingdom, and propose them as a pattern for the imitation of others, and yet should immediately after give such a description of his disciples, as must necessarily exclude those *Infants*, whom he had before acknowledged, from being of the number of them. How incompatible must such a conduct be to him, who was the Wisdom of the Father, and who had the Spirit of Wisdom without measure !

It has always been esteemed a self-evident maxim, that whatever is asserted of the whole of any kind of Beings, is asserted of every part of that whole ; the whole number of those who were qualified to be the subjects of Christ's Kingdom are here characterized under the denomination of *Little Ones* ; and since it is asserted of all in the general that *they believe in Christ*, it must be asserted of every particular, not only of the *Adult*, but also of *Infants*, to whom this appellation equally belongs. The human species is usually distinguished by the character of a rational and intelligent race of animals, and should it be said by any, that *Young Children* are not rational and intelligent creatures, and consequently are not of the human species, because they have not the full use of their Reason and Understanding, such an assertion would  
certainly



certainly be judged extremely ridiculous. The case is the same here, only the order is inverted, Children of the human race are called *Men*, because they have the faculties and growing capacities of *Men*; the *Adult* disciples of Christ are called *Little Ones*, because they resemble them in good measure in the purity and teachableness of their dispositions, but whether older or younger they are *Men* and *Little Ones*, on account of that Reason and Faith with which they are in a greater or less degree indowed.

*Infants* have the capacity of Reason and Faith too, though not the compleat exercise of it; and indeed both Reason and Faith are more incorrupt and unprejudiced in them, than they are or can be in any who have lived any considerable time in a sensual and vicious world. *Infants* are therefore Believers in Christ in the purest and most genuine manner; i. e. they have the most ready disposition of any to receive and comply with the instructions of Christ when communicated to them; and their inability to declare this readiness is no more a proof of their being destitute of it, than their inability to discover their rational faculties by rational acts and exercises is an argument of their being void of intellectual capacities: nay, I will venture to say, that there is much stronger evidence of *Infants* being possessed of a true Faith in Christ, in that sense wherein I have shewn it to be necessary to Baptism, than can possibly be derived from the most open and most exact profession of it. The confession of the mouth is only intended to discover the belief and sincerity of the heart, and how far this may be counterfeit Scripture instances sufficiently evince, but in the hearts of *Infants* there can be no insincerity or deceit, and there is not the least room to doubt of their being fully possessed  
of

of that Faith in Christ, which he himself, who is the searcher of hearts, has declared to be in them.

What has been here said is no more than a fair and rational deduction from what our Saviour has asserted of *Little Ones* in general, and by consequence of such as are so in age, that they *believe in him*. But it may be proper to examine whether this interpretation be agreeable to the scope and design of our blessed Lord's Discourse on this head. It was shewn, when I quoted the words preceding this text, that our Lord proposed *Infants* to his disciples as patterns of those dispositions which were necessary to qualify them to become subjects of his Kingdom, and that he allowed them to be the most worthy of an admission into it; now I think it is highly probable that this declaration of Christ in favour of *Infants* raised a spirit of jealousy and disgust in the disciples, they thought it hard that those who had done nothing for him should be so far preferred before them, who had given such full proof of their fidelity to their Master; and this their antipathy to *Infants* discovered itself soon after very plainly, in their endeavours to prevent the bringing of *Little Children* to our Lord for his Blessing; the foresight of this, together with his discernment of the present working of their spirits, made it necessary for him to lay in a caution against this aversion which they had entertained to his Infant disciples.

Our Saviour therefore tells them verse the fifth,  
 ' That as he had before declared his superior ap-  
 ' probation of the dispositions of Little Children,  
 ' their regard to them also would be the best evi-  
 ' dence of their attachment to him, and that he  
 ' should esteem their receiving of them to a par-  
 ' ticipation of his favours, with the same appro-  
 ' bation

‘ bation as their receiving and acknowledging  
 ‘ himself’. On the other hand, he tells them,  
 verse the sixth, ‘ That should they be instrumental  
 ‘ in rejecting and debaring, \* *ὡς δ’ αὖ σκανδαλίσαι,*  
 ‘ those *Infant* favourites of his from his gracious  
 ‘ regard, of which they were most worthy, they  
 ‘ would expose themselves to such vengeance from  
 ‘ him, as would be exceeding more terrible than  
 ‘ the severest of bodily punishments’. Verse the  
 seventh Christ tells them, ‘ That the corrupt and  
 ‘ selfish disposition of mankind would render it  
 ‘ unavoidable that offences must come, or that  
 ‘ many would be hindered from imbracing his  
 ‘ Religion by means of the perverting insinuations  
 ‘ and examples of those who have an influence  
 ‘ over them, but that their case would be very  
 ‘ dreadful who should by any means be the au-  
 ‘ thors and procurers of such opposition to him,  
 ‘ and to the enlargement of his Kingdom’. In  
 verses 8 and 9. our Lord proceeds to warn  
 his disciples of their own danger of being per-  
 verted from their fidelity to him, and tells them,  
 ‘ That if any should endeavour to dissuade and  
 ‘ prejudice them against yielding a due subjection  
 ‘ to him, however closely they might be connect-  
 ‘ ed with them, it was their duty to reject and  
 ‘ cast them off with the greatest abhorrence; and  
 ‘ if it behoved them to be so cautious of their be-  
 ‘ ing alienated from Christ and his ways, he ac-  
 ‘ quaints them in the tenth verse, that they  
 ‘ ought much more to beware lest they should  
 ‘ despise, (*καταφρονήσητε*, be evil-minded towards)  
 ‘ any of those *Little Ones*, because they are not only  
 ‘ highly

\* The sense in which I take the word *σκανδαλίζω* here, is  
 the very same with that in which it is used in all other parts of  
 the New Testament, viz. hindering any from being subject to  
 the authority, or obedient to the injunctions of Christ.

‘ highly esteemed by him, but have moreover the  
 ‘ most exalted of the inhabitants of Heaven al-  
 ‘ ways residing in the court of the most high God,  
 ‘ as their most zealous protectors to espouse their  
 ‘ cause, and avenge any slights or wrongs that  
 ‘ may be offered to them’.

It appears from hence, that the whole of our Saviour’s Discourse is directed against any offensive or contemptuous behaviour towards those whom he was ready to receive as his disciples and subjects ; and who were they whom the disciples were in danger of despising and rejecting? Not such grown persons as discovered an inclination to become Fellow-Christians with them, for it was their employment, and they seem to have been very zealous and assiduous in it, to make converts to Christ, and they could therefore have no aversion to the receiving such converts ; but their opposition was directed against those *Young Children* who were so high in the esteem of our blessed Lord, and whom they imagined he had injuriously preferred before them ; for this they are blamed, against this they are cautioned by our Saviour, and he does it for this reason, because they are such as *believe in him*, and consequently have the best dispositions for becoming his disciples and subjects of his Kingdom.

The Baptism of *Infants* is therefore a Baptism of Believers, such as are so with the greatest certainty, and such as are so in the highest degree ; their qualifications for Baptism are proposed by Christ as most excellent in themselves, and worthy the imitation of all others ; they have these qualifications in such perfection as is scarce attainable by any besides them, and there is stronger evidence for their being possessed of them than the Apostles themselves could produce, though they had left  
 all



all to follow Christ: in the present age therefore wherein a great concurrence of worldly advantages conspires to induce persons to imbrace the Christian Profession, the highest proof of Faith and Sincerity which can be given by an *adult* professor must fall vastly short of that which is to be found in the *Infant* disciple. *Infants* therefore are not only the best subjects of Baptism, as they were allowed to be by our blessed Lord at the time of his Ministry, but I may venture to say, they are the only ones in a Christian Country whose qualification for it is capable of full proof; for if our Lord judged those whom he himself converted to be less worthy of it than *Infants*, and if the first Ministers of his Church were deceived by a false profession of Faith in any whom they admitted to Baptism, much more may the present Administrators of that Ordinance admit persons utterly unqualified for it, since it is possible they may offer themselves to it from corrupt and unworthy principles, which it is impossible for them to discern.

Having finished the demonstrative part of this Proposition, I shall shut it up with a brief but serious and tender Expostulation with those who refuse or neglect to confer the Baptismal Dedication on their *Infant Offspring*; and I would found my Expostulation on that of our blessed Saviour, *Suffer Little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God.* They have the most proper qualifications, as well as the most indisputable right, to be admitted into the Kingdom and Church of Christ, and will you not do what is in your power, and what appears to be your duty, to put them in possession of this privilege? Will you wilfully exclude them from that blessing which he hath intended for them, and which your regard for them requires you to con-

vey to them ? Be assured that Christ will highly resent this contempt of his Grace and Authority, for *if you offend*, or hinder from a participation of his favours, any of *your Little Ones*, *it were better that a Millstone was hanged about your Neck, and that you were drowned in the Depth of the Sea.* No temporal punishment you can expose yourself to will be equivalent to that which you will deserve, by an exclusion of those Favourites of our Lord from a share in that Covenant to which he graciously admits them, by a rejection of that Ordinance which is necessary to give them a title to it. I think you must be convinced that those Offsprings of your bodies are extremely dear to Christ, and fited to become members of his mystical body, and surely they ought to be equally dear to you ; as their Advocate then, suffer me to intreat and beseech you, that as you are the Parents of their Flesh, you would also in this respect become the Fathers of their Spirits. *If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy, in being like-minded towards them.*

## PROPOSITION IV.

Instruction in the Principles and observance of the Duties of Christianity are indispensable attendants of Baptism, and are absolutely necessary to render the Subjects of it compleat disciples of Christ.

This Proposition is very plainly contained in the words of the Baptismal Commission. The two essential requirements for making disciples there mentioned are the Baptizing and Teaching of them, *Disciple all Nations, Baptizing them, and Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* And as *teaching* is the consequent in the order of the words, it may fairly be presumed to be so in the order of practice. It has been shewn, under the first Proposition, that Baptism is the Initiating and Consecrating Ordinance of Christianity, and that its primary intention is to enter disciples into the School of Christ; and it follows from hence, that its administration must be previous to their participation of its priviledges and their instruction in its distinguishing Rudi-ments and its sublime Mysteries.

An observation of the conduct of the Apostles will also be sufficient to convince us that *Discipline, or Instruction*, was intended not to go before, but to succeed Baptism; for every instance produced under the foregoing Proposition, as a proof of their Preaching no other Doctrine as necessary to Baptism than that of Faith in Jesus as the Christ, is also a proof that any thing more than this is at least needless, if not altogether improper and unseasonable; for had they thought it proper and ne-

cessary to instruct those whom they endeavoured to make converts of in the distinguishing Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, previous to their admission as such by Baptism, we should certainly have had some intimations of it recorded in the histories of the many conversions they made, and the total silence of the Writer of their Acts is, I think, an unanswerable argument that they did not convey any such instructions to them.

But though we do not find the Apostles communicating any such peculiar tenets of Christianity to their converts before they were Baptized, there is abundant evidence that they did it afterwards, and it was absolutely necessary they should; the nature of their office, as well as the Baptismal Commission, must convince them of its necessity, and engage them to it; and we find, that after they had made disciples in any City, they were far from being negligent in giving them all due instruction in the knowledge of those divine Truths with which they were enlightened by the Inspiration of Christ, and the Revelations of the holy Spirit. Thus we are told that at ANTIOCH, when a great number had believed and turned unto the Lord, the Church at Jerusalem sent forth Barnabas to Antioch, who exhorted them all, that with Purpose of Heart they would cleave unto the Lord; and having afterwards found Paul, they assembled themselves a whole year with the Church, and the Disciples were called Christians first at ANTIOCH. ACTS xi. 22—26. deriving their appellation, probably, from their early attainment of the most compleat knowledge of the Christian Doctrine. We have another instance of the application of the Apostle to the instruction of the disciples after their Baptism, and that was at ROME, and at the time when he was a prisoner there; we are informed that there were many



many brethren or disciples there before his arrival, who went forth to meet him, and that during his abode at ROME he dwelt *a whole Year in his own hired House, and received all that came unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*, διδασκων τα περι της κυριας Ιησου Χριστου. See ACTS xxviii. 15 and 21. I shall add but one text more among many others which might be quoted to this purpose, and that contains St. PAUL's appeal to the Elders of the Church at EPHESUS, *that he had kept back nothing that was profitable to them, but had taught them both publickly, and from House to House, and that he had not shuned to declare unto them the whole Counsel of God.* ACTS xx. 20 and 27.

It being evident then that the Apostles were very careful in instructing their converts in the Principles and Laws of Christ after their Baptism, it will be proper to inquire what those Laws and Injunctions were which were inculcated by them on his servants and followers; and this we may learn from a consideration of the words contained in the order for Baptism, and also from a recollection of what has been shewn to be our Lord's design in constituting and establishing his Church and Kingdom. By the words of Institution the Apostles were directed to *teach* those, whom they had made disciples by Baptizing them, *to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them.* The Commands of Christ then delivered to them in the course of his Preaching, must be the principal subjects of their Teaching and Instruction, the Fundamental Principles of his Religion; and what these are, as to their scope and design, may be judged from the well known intent of our Lord in setting up his Church and Kingdom in the world, which was the overthrowing the usurped dominion and

power of the Devil over it, for we are told that it was *for this Cause* that *the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.* 1 JOHN iii. 8. And what the works of the Devil were, and wherein his dominion and laws consisted, the same verse informs us, *he that commiteth Sin is of the Devil, for the Devil sinneth from the Beginning.* The constitution of Satan's Kingdom then is that of Impiety and Vice, that of Christ must therefore be a constitution of Godliness and Holiness; and by this character they are as widely distinguished from each other as light from darkness, and the subjects of them must be of an equally contrary temper and conduct, for this is what the same Apostle tells us in the tenth verse, *In this the Children of God are manifest and the Children of the Devil, whosoever doth not Righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother.*

And if we take a view of the Laws and Commandments of our blessed Lord, as they were promulgated by him in his Preaching, we shall find them to be nothing else but a system of the most sublime Piety, and the most exalted Morality; the love of God and the love of our neighbour are, according to his account, comprehensive of the whole of our duty. MATTHEW xxii. 40. The only condition which will intitle us to his favour, and a participation of everlasting happiness, is declared by him to be an observance of these Precepts. *If thou wilt enter into Life,* says he, *keep the Commandments.* MATTHEW xix. 17. and it is represented as the grand intent of communicating his Gospel to men for their salvation, *that denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* TITUS ii. 12.

It

It would be a needless task to enumerate the many Moral Precepts and Commands which we find in the Gospels; it is sufficient to observe, that the Fear and Love of God, Trust in and Submission to him, Honour and Worship manifested by humble Prayer, devout Praise and serious attendance upon his Institutions; Justice and Mercy, Fidelity and Truth, Meekness and Patience, Sobriety and Temperance, are the essential and necessary Duties required by Christ of his followers. The Laws of Virtue and Moral Goodness are therefore the Laws of Christ's Kingdom, these are what he commanded the Apostles, and these are what he enjoined them to inculcate on all the converts they made in consequence of their Baptism.

And that these were the chief subjects of the Apostles subsequent Teaching, will appear from an examination of the Epistles they wrote to the Churches they had founded, which besides adjusting some particular matters which occasioned doubts and disputes amongst them, do intirely consist of Moral Precepts urged with great strength and plainness on those to whom they wrote; these may be seen throughout the whole body of some of the Epistles, but are generally compacted together in short but expressive Aphorisms towards the close of almost all of them; and they are for the most part inculcated on Principles purely Christian, and are shewn to arise from that relation in which we stand to Christ, and to be indispensably necessary to our participation of his blessings.

It cannot indeed be denied, that besides those Moral Virtues which are so strictly enjoined in the New Testament, there are matters also contained of a speculative nature, and such as are required of us as articles of that *Faith, without which it is impossible*

*to please God* ; but upon a careful consideration of them, we shall not find any there proposed as matters of meer speculation for the imployment or entertainment of the understanding, but only such as have an influence on the Will and Conduct, such as are either fundamental to Religion, or powerful helps and encouragements to virtuous practice ; and those only can be Fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, which have a tendency to promote Holiness and Virtue in the hearts and lives of the professors of it.

Some Doctrines there are which are necessary and Fundamental to all Religion whatsoever, such as the Existence of God, the Universality and Morality of his Government, and the Essential Difference of Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice ; there are others which are Fundamental to Christianity, as being absolutely necessary to support the supposition of its truth, such as the divine Authority of Christ as a Prophet and Lawgiver, a King and Judge in his Church and Kingdom ; now these are necessary Fundamentals, and such as if taken away unavoidably overthrow the whole of Religion, whether Natural or Christian.

But there are other Doctrines besides these which are necessary to be believed on account of that encouragement they give to the Practice of Piety and Moral Goodness, and the more they contribute to this, the more they deserve the character of Fundamental Doctrines of our holy Religion. Some of these are fitted to promote our reverence of Christ, and our subjection to his government, others have a tendency to incite us to a chearful and persevering obedience to his Laws and Commandments. Of the former sort are the Divinity of our blessed Lord, his eternal Existence and intimate Union with the Father, his Resurrection, by a di-  
vine



vine Power, from the Dead, his Ascension into Heaven, and Exaltation to the most sovereign Glory and Dominion at the right hand of God, and his appointment to the final Judgment and Recompence of the whole world ; a due belief and consideration of these it is evident cannot but have a powerful influence on Christians in forming them to a reverential awe of Christ, and humble dependance upon him, and are therefore necessary to be inculcated as a proper means of enforcing an obedience to his religious and moral Precepts.

There are other Doctrines contained in the Gospel which have a tendency to render our observance of the Laws of Christ chearful and persevering, and must therefore make a necessary part of those instructions which are to be conveyed to his disciples, and they are the Condescension of his Incarnation, the Holiness and Exemplariness of his Life, but above all, his humbling himself even unto Death, and thereby becoming a Propitiation for the sins of the whole world ; for by the last of these he purchased a Power of conferring the Forgiveness of Sins on all that are truly penitent, he obtained a new Covenant founded on the gracious terms of a sincere though imperfect obedience ; he procured the assistance of the holy Spirit to aid, strengthen, and comfort us in our weak and often ineffectual endeavours after Holiness, and acquired an authority to bestow an eternity of happiness on all who believe in and obey him.

And what noble incitements are the last mentioned Doctrines to a steady and willing obedience to the Laws of Christ ? A firm belief and frequent recollection of these is sufficient to remove every distressing doubt and desponding solicitude which would be a hinderance to our progress in the holy and

and divine life, and to be more than a balance against the melancholy reflections on the frailty of our nature, the strength of temptations, and the difficulties attending a course of piety and virtue. There is no need of a particular reference to the several Scriptures on which these Doctrines are founded, since they are well known to all who have a tolerable acquaintance with the Principles of Christianity; neither is there any necessity of proving that the promoting of Holiness and Virtue was the design of their being revealed, since they are so admirably and exactly calculated to further that design; our chief care should be, that they be so inculcated as to become most instrumental to the service of Religion and Virtue, for then they will best answer the end of Christ in revealing them to us.

Since therefore it appears that the Laws of Piety and Virtue are the principal part of the Christian Code, and that other things contained therein were intended only to be subservient to these Laws, it is easy to determine which of these ought to have the preference in the Teaching and Instructing of Christians; for surely those Commands which our Lord gave the Apostles, and which he enjoined them to inculcate on others, must have a clear preheminance above any Doctrines or Rules which are calculated only to be assisting to the observance of those Moral Precepts. Instruction in Morals is therefore true Christian Instruction, such as Christ himself used, and such as he commanded his Apostles and Ministers to imitate and succeed him in.

It cannot have escaped the observation of many that Moral Instruction, as well as Morality itself, are held in great contempt by numbers of the present age who call themselves *Christians*; and that

that they have their place too often supplied by senseless Rants, nice Speculations, or Points of Doctrine which have not the least tendency to promote Christian Morality, but oftentimes a quite contrary, by which means the end of Christ in publishing his Gospel, and making disciples, is defeated, and a wide breach opened for the admission of a torrent of Impiety and Immorality; which, I fear, will one day or other overwhelm the Land in utter destruction: and I cannot but think that a great part of that Wickedness, Debauchery, and Impiety, which general observation declares to have a growing prevalency amongst us, takes its rise from a want of instruction of persons, especially such as are of younger years, in the excellent *Morals* of the Gospel.

With whatever scoffing and derision therefore *Moral Virtue* may be treated by some, sure I am that it is in itself a qualification of the highest excellency, and as it is enforced by the command of Christ, it is an absolutely necessary qualification for becoming his disciples indeed, for obtaining an interest in his favour, and a title to that happiness which he has proposed for our attainment. *Morality* is a necessary part of the divine nature, and of the image of God on the Soul, and those despised Moral Virtues, when enobled by Christian Views and Principles, become Divine and Christian Graces, and are true genuine fruits of the Spirit; for *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Meekness, and Temperance.* GALAT. V. 22, 23.

Having thus seen what the Subjects of that Teaching are which Christ enjoins in consequence of Baptism, let us next inquire, “ Who they are  
“ to whom this Teaching is committed, or who  
“ are appointed to be Instructors in the Christian  
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“ Rudiments.” If we again look back upon the words of the Commission, we shall there find very plain directions in this matter, for it is evident from thence, that the Charge of Teaching belongs to the same persons with that of Baptizing, they are both directed to the Apostles who received the Commission ; but neither of them appears to be confined to them, for both Baptism and Instruction were intrusted to the care of all the Ministers of the Church of Christ, and were appointed to be administered in common by all of them.

But there seems to be a set of men whose designation was originally appropriated to the work of Teaching and Instructing the new converts to Christianity, and they were the *Presbyters*, or Elders of the Church ; it was for this purpose chiefly, that the Apostles *ordained Elders in every City*, where a Church was planted. ACTS xiv. 23. TITUS i. 5. and it was a qualification required of those *faithful men*, to whom the word of God was committed, that *they should be able to teach others also*. 2 TIMOTHY ii. 2. And those Teachers are in several places distinguished from the Apostles, the Prophets, and Pastors of the Church, with a view to the particular employment they were engaged in. See 1 COR. xii. 28. EPH. iv. 11. ROMANS xii. 7.

As the Ministers of Christ therefore have the office of Baptizing committed to them, so they must also have that of Teaching as their province; not indeed that others are hereby excluded from instructing Christians in the knowledge of that Religion into which they have been Baptized, for it is every man's duty to instruct those with whom he converses in the great and important Truths of the Gospel, especially if he has been instrumen-  
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ral in converting any of them from Infidelity; but this care is more strictly incumbent on those to whom the Preaching of the Gospel is committed, who ought *to give themselves continually to the Ministry of the Word.* ACTS vi. 4. *To preach the Word, to be instant in season, and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-suffering and Doctrine.* 2 TIMOTHY iv. 2.

But it may be inquired, “ Whether a share in “ this office of Instruction does not belong to “ others as well as the Ministers of the Gospel ? ” Doubtless a very great one. Every Head and Master of a Family is under a strong obligation to instruct those who are subjected to his authority in Moral and Christian Duties, for the sake of his own honour and comfort, and for the furthering of the temporal and eternal interest of those who are dependant upon him. Parents especially are utterly inexcusable if they are negligent in the religious Education of their Offspring; they have the best opportunities, and the most commanding influence to enable them to carry on this important work; their Children have a claim to their utmost diligence and care in the discharge of this duty to them; and their own happiness, which is inseparable from the virtue and piety of their Descendants, has an entire dependance upon their fidelity in it. But, I hope, I have no need to use many arguments to convince Masters and Parents, that the religious Instruction of their Families is a duty to which they are indispensably obliged.

This which I have last insisted upon is an obligation of nature, but the cultivation of Christian Knowledge ought not to be left under the sole influence of that, there are engagements and stipulations to be entered into by those to whom the  
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care of religious Instruction does properly belong, and Baptism was certainly intended to enter those who offer any to a participation of that Ordinance into such an engagement, and to confirm it by a solemn vow for that purpose; it was, doubtless, for this reason chiefly, that Sponsors or Sureties in Baptism took place in the first ages of the Christian Church: there was a necessity that all who were Baptized should be taught the important Principles and Duties of Christianity, and there was an equal necessity, that this charge should be committed to such as were best qualified and disposed for the execution of it; and who could be more so than those who were either instrumental in the conversion of the Baptized Converts, or where otherwise engaged by friendship, affinity, or natural authority to apply themselves to it in the most serious and careful manner? Parents therefore, and Masters of Families were, probably, the persons who usually bound themselves by solemn stipulation in behalf of their Offspring and Dependants.

There seems indeed to be another use of Sureties and Sponsors in the Primitive Church, which was to engage for the stedfastness of the new Converts, and to secure them from the danger of Apostacy to which they had strong temptations, from the violence of Persecution, and the inticing allurements of the world and the flesh; by these many were drawn off from that profession of Christianity which they had embraced, and into which they had entered themselves by Baptism; and in both these views the appointment of Sureties must be allowed to be an useful and equitable institution; and though in the later of these respects there does not seem to be much need of their continuance in the present age, yet  
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in the former they are now equally necessary, and will continue to be so in all ages of the Christian Church.

The continuance of these Sponsors to the present time is therefore by no means to be condemned; the only Question which remains to be decided is, “ Who are the most proper persons “ to undertake this Stipulation and Suretiship for “ the religious and moral Instruction of those “ who are Baptized ?” And as adult Converts to the Faith of Christ are now very rare, and they are altogether unnecessary for those who have been instructed in the Knowledge of Christianity, previously to their Baptism, the inquiry will turn entirely upon the fitness of the persons who are to bind themselves by this engagement for the Instruction of Baptized *Infants*: and here, I think, it must be allowed, that the *Parents* of those *Infants* have generally the best capacity and opportunity for their religious Instruction; their authority over them, and constant abode with them, give them an advantage, superior to that of any others, for instilling religious Knowledge and moral Principles into their minds; and there is the strongest obligation in the world on those to whom Children owe their beings, to be careful to cultivate that Knowledge and Virtue in their Children, which alone would render their beings a blessing to them, by *bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, unto whom they are Baptized. EPH. vi. 4.

But though *Parents* seem to have a natural right to this office of instructing their Baptized Offspring, and on this account are most fit to take upon them the Baptifmal Vow for this purpose, yet there may be, and frequently are, cases wherein this charge may be more properly committed

mitted to other pious Christians, who are disposed and qualified to undertake and discharge it. Gross ignorance and irreclaimable wickedness are, alas, too frequent and notorious in Parents to render them proper Guardians for the religious Education of their Children; and as in the case of civil Property bestowed on an *Infant*, if there be a danger or probability of its being wasted by the Parents, and not employed for its use, Guardians are appointed for him by publick authority, so when that Right which Children have to religious and moral Instruction is in danger of being withheld from them by the Fathers of their Flesh, nothing can be more equitable than that this trust should be committed to such pious Godfathers and Godmothers as are ready to bind themselves by the most solemn engagements to be faithful in the execution of it.

The retaining of Godfathers and Godmothers, when viewed in this light, can therefore have nothing culpable in it; and it would give me great pleasure could I also observe, that there is nothing culpable in the manner of those Sponsors taking upon them the solemn charge, and their consequent fulfilling of it; but as I have seen, so I cannot but declare with the deepest concern, the trifling, the vain, the impertinent manner in which this Service is commonly performed; the little regard which is paid to the most solemn engagements, and, I may even say, the profane mockery too often discoverable in entering into them. How generally is it looked upon as a matter of meer Form and Show, and intended only to give the Child a Name, as they usually describe it; which, when they have done, they reckon themselves discharged from all future Obligations to it, and are utterly regardless as to fur-



furthering their Improvement in Knowledge, or their Establishment in Virtue and Holiness.

Whether therefore the Parents become Sureties for their Children, or others are taken in to supply their deficiency, let me intreat all who undertake this Charge, that, as they value the welfare of their Children, the happiness of their Country, and the preservation and growth of Religion in the world, all which do in great measure depend upon the right Education of the rising Generation, that they would exert themselves to the utmost in instructing their tender Pupils in the knowledge of that excellent Religion into which they were admitted by Baptism, and in engaging them to a diligent and chearful observance of and compliance with it.

I would only further recommend it to the Baptismal Sponsors, that they would make it their principal care to instil the Principles of Morality and Virtue into the minds of their Infant Charge, to kindle in their hearts a love to it and desire after it, and to be always cautious that they do not divert their attention to those great and weighty matters of the Law, by puzzling their heads with abstruse Notions, and vain unprofitable Speculations, to the great hinderance of their progress in holiness here, and hazard of their attaining happiness hereafter. It is such a way of Education, and such only, that can, by the blessing of God, revive the greatly decayed and almost lost interest of real Religion; such a way of Education will afford the truest comfort to every pious and serious person to whom the care of Children is committed; and such a way of Education is best fitted to secure to those Young Favourites of Christ the continuance of his ten-

der regard to them, and to qualify them for the enjoyment of his glorious and everlasting Rewards.

I have now finished my Reflections on the Duties of those to whom the care of instructing Baptized christians is, or ought to be committed, and am hence led to the consideration of the Duties incumbent on the Baptized in consequence of their Baptism ; for as the former were appointed by the Commission to Teach, it is manifest that the later are under an obligation to learn the Principles and Laws of Christianity. Knowledge is the foundation of all religious and virtuous conduct, and without it neither heart nor life can be good ; but it must be allowed, that the knowledge which has a tendency to rectify the heart and direct the conduct is preferable to all other kinds of knowledge. No man can be the better for that knowledge which has no fitness in it to make him better, and the importance of all knowledge must be determined by its influence on the religious and moral character of the person who attains it.

In our inquiries after Christian Knowledge therefore, we should be directed by the tendency of it to our improvement in holiness ; curious and subtle speculations ought to have little of our regard, in comparison with those Truths which have a religious and moral influence on the heart ; and the more they have of that, the more they ought to be the subject of our study and contemplation. But it would be useless to recapitulate here what was but just now said, about the instructions to be given in consequence of Baptism, since whatever preheminance is there allowed to any, such ought to have a distinguishing  
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regard paid them by those who are instructed, as well as by those who are appointed to be Instructors.

But it is not so much the knowledge as the observance of the Laws and Duties of Christianity, which Christ inculcated in the Baptismal Commission; for when he commands his Apostles to teach his Disciples to *observe all things whatsoever he commanded them*, it is evidently supposed and implied, that they were not only to learn but to observe and practice those things which were taught them; it is plain, that a man cannot be a thorough disciple to any master without both learning and complying with those rules in which he is instructed; our blessed Lord puts this matter out of all doubt with regard to his own Disciples and Followers, for he says to the believing Jews, *If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Disciples.* JOHN viii. 31. i. e. “ If ye not only “ believe, but practice those things in which I “ have instructed you, then shall ye truly deserve “ the Name of my Disciples and Followers.” And again, JOHN xv. 8, and 14. Christ says unto them, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit, so shall ye be my Disciples; ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* i. e. “ This will be the best proof that you are real “ christians, by this you will give the greatest “ honour to God, and manifest the truest friendship to me, if your lives discover the sincerity “ of your attachment to my service.”

This was plainly the great end and design of Baptism, to fit and dispose persons for a conformity to that Religion into which they are Baptized, by putting them into the School of Christ, and giving them the best opportunities for instruction in his Laws; and this the holy Scripture

declares to be the intent of Baptism, for thus it is said, that *we are buried with Christ by Baptism into Death*, with this view, *that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead, by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* ROMANS vi. 4. And that *the Baptism which saves us, is not the putting away the filth of the flesh by the washing of water, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.* 1 PETER iii. 21. And I think Baptism seems to lay an additional obligation on the person Baptized, though it be done in Infancy, to use the most earnest endeavours for the attainment of the highest perfection in holiness and virtue; for as *those who were circumcised, all of whom except new converts were Infants, became Debtors thereby to do the whole Law of MOSES.* GALT. v. 3. so they that are Baptized become thereby obliged to obey the whole Law of Christ; for this reason Baptism is called the *Washing of Regeneration*, because the Baptized person is entered thereby into a state of more perfect purity and holiness, cherished by divine Influences and *the renewing of the holy Ghost.* TITUS iii. 5.

And this obligation to superior degrees of holiness arises from Baptism chiefly, as it is a means of putting those who are Baptized into a better capacity of knowing their duty, and affords greater helps for the performance of it. Indeed I am persuaded, that it is common for persons to look upon Baptism more as a Privilege than as an Obligation, and to value themselves upon it as the Jews did upon Circumcision. PHIL. iii. 5. without attending to or endeavouring to attain the great end and design of it; and it is even a shame to Christianity, to observe how little difference there is between persons Baptized amongst us and those that are not; but as *Circumcision* only  
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*profiteth those that keep the Law, but if they be breakers of the Law their Circumcision is made Uncircumcision.* ROMANS ii. 25. so also we are Circumcised with the Circumcision made without hands, only by means of putting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh, buried with him in Baptism, which is the Circumcision of Christ, or Christian Circumcision. COLOSS. ii. 11, 12.

Let this therefore be our principal care as many of us as are Baptized into Christ, that we put on Christ. GALAT. iii. 27. Let us be clothed with his Righteousness and bear his Image, for as that only is true Circumcision, which is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men but of God. ROMANS ii. 29. So if we are Baptized to any good end and purpose, we must have our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, as well as our Bodies washed with pure Water. HEBREWS x. 22.

Suffer me then to intreat all who are become Members of the Church of Christ by Baptism, to behave and act as such. You are christians, you have by Baptism acquired a right to that honourable name, and the only way to deserve it is to be christians, not in Name and Profession only, but in Deed and in Truth. Our holy Religion is of the most noble and excellent nature, it contains the best Morals and Rules of Life that were ever laid down, and it proposes the most cogent and exalted motives to engage us in the observation of them; let us not then slight or neglect any of its Institutions; let all its divine Precepts be written in our hearts, and be religiously observed in our lives; and let us be always aiming after the highest perfection which our natures are capable of, and which our Religion is admirably adapted to train us up to the attainment of.

And as Baptism has a near connection with that other, and the only other Positive Institution of Christianity, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I cannot allow myself to conclude this Proposition without urging a more general and regular observance of it ; its near relation to, and close dependance upon the Sacrament of Baptism, must appear evident to every one who attentively considers their natures. By the later of these we are initiated into the Christian Profession, by the former we publickly declare our free choice and approbation of it ; by one we are admitted Members of the Church of Christ, by the other we solemnly acknowledge Christ as our Head, and maintain Communion with him and our Fellow-Members. By one we are dedicated and consecrated to Christ, by the other we ratify and renew this Dedication and Consecration ; and both these duties are of equal obligation, they have the same authority to enforce them, and there are Commands equally plain on which they are founded ; and I am persuaded that the neglect of complying with this Duty, and observance of this Institution, is one of the principal occasions of the scandalous miscarriages of many who call themselves christians. Should I tell you, that if you do not partake of this Ordinance you are no friends to Christ, you may think the charge too severe, but I should not say it if he himself had not said it, *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you* ; the Command of Christ by which it is enjoined is, I am sure, as plain as any in the Gospel, *to do this in Remembrance of him ; and to shew forth his Death till he come.* 1 CORIN. xi. 24 and 26. And what pretence or claim can we have to the name or priviledges of christians if we wilfully slight, as wilfully it must be, one of his most plain and important Commandments.

mandments. I beseech all into whose hands these Sheets shall fall, seriously to consider this; for though a considerable number are admitted into Membership with the Church by Baptism, few, very few, join themselves to the Church by entering into its Communion; and it would be my great rejoicing to find, that for every one that was Baptized, there was one added to the Church by a full participation of its Ordinances.

#### PROPOSITION V.

There are many Blessings and Priviledges promised and communicated by Christ to Baptized christians, on account of their Baptism.

In my explication of the words of the Commission for Baptism, by way of Introduction to the several Propositions which I have endeavoured to confirm, I observed towards the close of it, that the Promise contained in the last Clause is not confined to the Apostles of Christ and their Successors in the Ministry, but is extended to all his faithful followers, and comprehends in it blessings of the largest extent and most valuable worth. *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

That this Promise could not be made good by the personal abode of Christ with christians upon earth is evident and certain, for he was very soon after this taken up into Heaven, and will not descend from thence till he comes to judge the world at the final consummation of all things; it can only therefore relate to Christ's gracious presence with his disciples by his Spirit, and his conveying of divine and saving Influences by that means.

This was what our Lord promised his Followers before his crucifixion, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* JOHN xiv. 16. And he afterwards tells them who this Comforter is, and enumerates some of those advantages and blessings they might expect to derive from him. *But the Comforter, which is the holy Ghost, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.* verse 26. And this Promise was confirmed to them by Christ in his Institution of Baptism just before his ascension into Heaven, with a particular assurance that it should be in a very short time fulfilled. ACTS i. 5. And we have an account that it was accomplished accordingly in a very surprizing manner on the day of Pentecost, by a descent of the holy Ghost on the Apostles, discovering his presence and abode with them by the most astonishing effects, and most miraculous operations.

This pouring out of the Spirit was intended indeed to enable the Apostles and first christians more successfully to propagate the Religion of Jesus, but the gift of the holy Ghost was not a privilege confined to the Apostles, nor were those miraculous effects the only ones which were intended to be communicated by this gift; for all christians have a promise equally to be relied on, that *God will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.* LUKE xi. 13. And that this gift of the holy Spirit is dependant upon, and an appendage to Baptism, is evident from its being so closely connected with it in several texts of Scripture. Thus we are told JOHN iii. 5. that *except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* Being born of the Spirit is here accounted a common and joint privilege with that of being born  
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of Water, or being Baptized, and has an immediate connection with it; and again, the *Washing of Regeneration*, or Baptism, is conjoined with *the renewing of the holy Ghost*, as inseparable one from the other. TITUS iii. 5. and EPHES. iv. 4, 5. *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.* All these are reckoned up as the joint participations of christians, and are all of them connected with their Baptism. Let me add one text more to these, and that is the Apostle's application of the promise of God's Covenant to all Baptized christians, and his assuring them of the gift of the holy Ghost in consequence of their Baptism. ACTS ii. 38, 39. *Repent, and be Baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost; for the Promise is unto you, and to your Children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

In this last text the remission of sins is set before the gift of the holy Ghost, but this was the distinguishing priviledge of JOHN'S Baptism, which was a Baptism of Repentance for the remission of sins, and as this was considered under the first Proposition, where I treated that Point, I shall now confine myself to the other part, the gift of the holy Ghost; and as this promise was made equally to all christians as an appendage of their being Baptized, let us inquire, "What priviledges and blessings are contained therein". And if we carefully examine what is said of it in other places of the New Testament, we shall find it to be comprehensive of many great and valuable advantages. That which is contained in the first of those texts, which were just now quoted, is the blessing or grace of Regeneration, or being entered into a new  
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and highly advantageous state of life by the influences of the holy Spirit. This is described in other Scriptures by the figurative representations of *putting off the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, and putting on that new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.* EPHES. iv. 22 and 24. And in this respect christians are called *the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works.* EPHES. ii. 10. And this *new Man* is said to be *renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created him.* COLOSS. iii. 10. This is so great a change, that it is compared to a translation out of a state of Darkness into one of Light. EPHES. v. 8. a quickening from Death to Life. EPHES. ii. 1.

I would not have it supposed that I represent this regenerating change as a physical and necessary effect of the Baptismal washing, for I have no other conception of it than that of a moral one, produced by the influence of the holy Spirit given in consequence of Baptism, and wrought by a moral, though for the most part an imperceptible energy ; and being productive of such admirable effects, it very well deserves to be described by the figurative representation of *a new Birth*, by which the christian is begotten again from a state productive of sin and misery to one that has the greatest advantage for the attainment of holiness and happiness, and such as if he be not wanting to himself he will certainly attain ; and surely this is a privilege of Baptism highly worthy our esteem and gratitude.

But there are other blessings attendant upon Baptism, arising for the most part from this last mentioned one, which are powerful engagements to the practice of it ; for by this Baptismal Regeneration christians are admitted into a new and gracious

cious Dispensation, vastly superior to that of Nature, or that of the Jewish Œconomy, being entered hereby into the New Covenant purchased and confirmed by Christ, a Covenant of Grace, granted upon easier Terms, and established upon better Promises, than the rest of mankind were partakers of. HEBREWS viii. 6. The Gentile Nations were in a state of enmity to God, slaves to Sin and Satan, and the Jewish Dispensation was a state of servitude and bondage to worldly elements and carnal observances, but the Christian Dispensation is a state of liberty, in which God is to be worshiped in a spiritual manner; and sincerity is all that is required in that and other duties, instead of an exact and sinless observance of them, *for this is the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel, after those Days, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their Minds, and write them in their Hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a People.* HEBREWS viii. 10.

There is another privilege attendant upon Baptism, or that state of Regeneration into which we are brought thereby, and that is our Adoption into the family of God as his Sons. Before the coming of Christ the people of God had no higher character than that of *Servants*, or at least of *Children under Tutors and Governors*, and on that account *nothing differing from Servants*; they were in *Bondage* under the elements of the world, but *when the fullness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son to redeem them from this servitude, that they might receive the Adoption of Sons.* GALAT. i. 1—5. And this Adoption or Sonship is the effect of the holy Spirit given unto us in Baptism, for *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*, as the Apostle tells us ROMANS viii. 14. and that this Sonship has a direct dependance upon our Baptism

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we are also informed GALAT. iii. 26. *For ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been Baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*

And this privilege of Adoption or Sonship has another character connected inseparably with it, which is that of Heirs, for *if we are Children, then we are Heirs, Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ.* ROMANS viii. 17. Which character is also declared to be founded on our Baptism, for having *put on Christ* thereby, as was just now observed, the Apostle adds in the next verse but one, *if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise.* GALAT. iii. 29. And a principal end of the *Washing of Regeneration* is said to be this, *that being justified by his Grace, we should be made Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life.* TITUS iii. 7.

And not only are christians intitled by Baptism to the character of Heirs, but to that also of being *Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ.* There is a very near relation, a very close union betwixt our blessed Lord and his followers, *He is not ashamed to call them Brethren.* HEBREWS ii. 11. and he only claims this superiority, that he is their Elder Brother, and *the first-born among many Brethren.* ROMANS viii. 29. And christians are not only thus nearly related to Christ, but are also admitted to a spiritual union with him ; he is our Head, and we are his Members, for *he is called the Head of the Body, the Church.* COLOSS. i. 18. *The Head of the Church, and the Saviour of the Body.* EPHES. v. 23. And we are said to be *Members of his Body, of his Flesh, and his Bones.* verse 30. And to this Head *the whole Body* being by *Joints and Bands* united, *has Nourishment ministered, is knit together, and increaseth with the Increase of God.* COLOSS. ii. 19. And that this near relation

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to, and intimate union with Christ, arises from our being Baptized into him, is declared with equal precision and plainness, for *as the Body is one, and hath many Members, so also is Christ; for by one Spirit we are all Baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.* I CORIN. xii. 12, 13. And again, *There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.* EPHES. iv. 4, 5.

Nor is this all, for as we are *Joint-Heirs with Christ*, so we are, together with him, *Heirs of God*, Heirs to a Being infinitely superior to the most opulent and magnificent Princes on earth, and consequently Heirs to the richest and most inestimable blessings, even to *a Crown of Glory, an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* I PETER i. 4. and v. 4. And to this happiness we are begotten by Baptism, for it is by the *Washing of Regeneration, and the renewing of the holy Ghost*—that we are made *Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life.* TITUS iii. 5—7. And being hereby made *the Children of God*, we shall also be *the Children of the Resurrection.* LUKE xx. 36. A Resurrection from a state of death and corruption, to one of immortal and unchangeable happiness; for as by Baptism *we have been planted together in the likeness of Christ's Death, we shall also be in the likeness of his Resurrection.* ROMANS vi. 5. and shall be glorified together with him. ROMANS viii. 17.

And as we have the promise of Eternal Life through Christ, so we have likewise an assurance from him, that we shall be made partakers of all those Means and Helps which are proper to dispose and qualify us for the injoyment of it; for this end it is that Christ vouchsafes us the privileges of his Word and Ordinances; his Gospel is  
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*the Power of God unto Salvation.* ROMANS i. 16. And *the Grace of God* manifested herein *bringeth Salvation.* TITUS ii. 11. It is therefore called the *Word of Life.* PHILIP. ii. 16. And this *ingrafted Word* is declared to be *able to save our souls.* JAMES i. 21. By this Word also, in concurrence with Baptism and the holy Spirit, we are said to be justified and sanctified; thus the Apostle tells the *EPHESIANS*, that *Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the Washing of Water, by the Word.* *EPHES. V. 25, 26.* *I CORIN. VI. 11.* *Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

These are some of the principal blessings and advantages promised by Christ in consequence of Baptism, and connected with it; and as they are no way restricted or appropriated to any particular persons, but allowed to be common to all the Baptized, I can see no reason why *Infants*, if they have a right to Baptism, and are capable of it, as I hope I have proved, should be denied a participation of any of those privileges, or be deemed incapable of them; certainly their all-wise Lord and gracious Redeemer would not call them to Baptism, without conveying those blessings to them which he bestows on all others; and for the same reason it would be the most daring presumption in any to say they have no capacity to receive them. For what should hinder their being born again into a spiritual and divine life by the Influences of the holy Spirit? What should exclude them from a share in the new Covenant procured by Christ? What is there in them to disqualify them from becoming the Sons and Children of God, any more than their being made the Children of men? Have they any way forfeited the character of Heirs to their

their heavenly Father, or a title to the injoyment of his heavenly Inheritance? May not the holy Spirit convey his sanctifying graces to them as well as to those of riper years? And may they not be admitted to a participation of the Word and Ordinances of Christ as soon as their age will put them in a capacity for it? No man, I am sure, can answer these Queries in the negative, without knowing more of the Mind and Will of Christ, than he has any where revealed in his Gospel; nay, I may even say, without contradicting the general scope and tenor of it. *Infants* have nothing in their disposition and character to incapacitate them for the reception of Grace, or the inheriting of Glory; but on the contrary, their Innocence and Humility are the best and most sufficient qualifications for it; and we may with certainty conclude, that their Father in Heaven will not discover such a partiality in his dealings, as to deny those privileges to *Infants* which he bestows on all others who are Baptized into the Name of Christ, when there is no possibility of their having by any means forfeited them.

But perhaps it may be here said, “ That if these  
 “ Priviledges are confined to Baptized persons so  
 “ as to be conferred on no other, is not this an un-  
 “ warrantable limitation of the divine Goodness  
 “ which is universal, and boundlessly communi-  
 “ cative; and is it consistent with the perfect wis-  
 “ dom of God, that he should bestow his best  
 “ blessings as a proper reward for so low an act  
 “ of Obedience as that of being Baptized?”

To this I answer. That I readily allow the Universality and Diffusiveness of the divine Goodness, that God is good to all, that his tender mercies are over all his works; and that I am fully perswaded that no man will be a loser, but an unspeakable gainer

gainer by every thing which he does in obedience to the divine Will, whether discovered by Reason or Revelation; and yet I am as fully perswaded that there are many blessings which are Peculiarities of Christianity, and which Christ alone has power to bestow, by virtue of that Authority and Prerogative which he has received from the Father. Christ is the *Mediator of the New Covenant*, and whatever privileges there are belonging to that, such can only be communicated by him. Now all these fruits and rewards of Baptism which I have mentioned are peculiar to this Covenant of Grace, to which this Ordinance is introductory, and for that reason can be conveyed to none but those who are within the Bounds of it: the Church of Christ is his Kingdom, his Inheritance in a very appropriated manner, and it can be in no way a strange supposition that he should appropriate some peculiar immunities and privileges to those who enter themselves subjects of it; some measures of Grace, and some degrees of happiness, are doubtless bestowed on all that are truly good, though they are not interested in Christ as their Mediator and Lord, and these may be of vastly superior value to any thing they have a proper claim and title to; but that which is properly Gospel Grace, must be the portion of those only who are professors of the Gospel, and the admission into that which is peculiarly Christ's Heavenly Kingdom can be granted to such only as are subjects of his Kingdom here on Earth.

I would not have it apprehended that I suppose all who are not admitted into the Church of Christ by Baptism, will be excluded from any share in a heavenly happiness, however innocent or virtuous they have been; for our Lord tells us, that in his *Father's House there are many Mansions*. JOHN xiv. 2.

Mansions



Mansions suited to the proficiency and advancement of those for whom they are intended, but all of them in a higher or lower degree Mansions of Happiness and Glory ; and certainly such of them as are allotted to the faithful Followers of Christ will be distinguished by the most resplendent glory, and be fitted for the injoyment of the most sublime happiness, for this is what he intimates in the words immediately following, *I go to prepare a Place for you.* The Habitation intended for true Christians in Heaven is of Christ's own preparing and building, he has raised it, and he has furnished it with all the materials of happiness.

So that it is more than probable that there are various degrees of happiness in a future world, adapted to the characters and dispositions of the truly wise and virtuous, though they are strangers to Christ and his Religion; and even such who have been born in Christian Nations, but have not been entered into the Church of Christ by Baptism, if it has not been owing to their own wilful neglect and contempt of that Ordinance, are undoubtedly intitled to advancements in happiness equal to those of the virtuous Heathen; but whatever mercies either of them have a claim to, it is plain they cannot be Covenant Mercies; because they were never entered into it by Baptism; and therefore it lays no restriction on Christ in his bestowing some *better things* on those who have a right to those *better Promises* on which the Covenant of Grace is founded : and it would be an evident restraint of the Grace of Christ, a *limiting this holy one of Israel*, to deny him the privilege of conferring those peculiar favours, which he has the power to give, on those who have behaved themselves as his faithful subjects and -servants, and have been *stedfast in his Covenant*; and as *Eter-*

*nal Life is the Gift of God, only through Jesus Christ our Lord, ROMANS vi. 23, it is manifest that all those priviledges and graces which are preparatory to, and qualifications for it, must also be his gift; and be bestowed on those who by profession of his Religion are called by his Grace, and are Heirs of the Kingdom.*

But it must not be imagined that these great and glorious priviledges are the certain and unalienable possession of all who are Baptized, for this manifold Grace of God may be received in vain. 2 CORIN. vi. 1. *We may resist the holy Ghost, quench the Spirit, and frustrate the Grace of God; and though we have a promise left us of entering into Rest, we may at last come short of it.* Our improvement and edification by the Word, and our compliance with the Influences of the holy Spirit, are necessary to our advancement in Holiness, and a *Meetness for the Inheritance of the saints in Light.* We are therefore exhorted to *give Diligence to make our Calling and our Election sure.* 2 PETER i. 10. *To walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called.* EPHES. iv. 1. *To grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 2 PETER iii. 8. *To be renewed in the Spirit of our Minds.* EPHES. iv. 23. *To add to our Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, and Charity, for so an Entrance shall be administered to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 PETER i. 5, 6, 7, and 11.

To conclude. Let all of us who make a profession of Christianity, and are admitted into the Kingdom and Church of Christ by Baptism, esteem it our indispensable duty, our most important concern, to *walk worthy of God, who hath called us unto his Kingdom and Glory.* As many of us as are Baptized into Christ let us put on Christ; and as  
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we have thereby *received the Adoption of Sons* from God, let us labour *to be conformed to the Image of his Son, who is the first-born among many brethren.* As we are partakers of Baptism, let it be our chief care that we comply with the End and Design of it; we are thereby begotten again in Christ Jesus, and we have the promise of his Spirit to maintain the life of God in our souls; but it must be our business also to cherish those Principles which are planted in our hearts, and to be continually growing and improving in the christian life. We are not real if we are not throughout Christians. Let our whole conduct then be directed by the Precepts and the Example of our blessed Saviour, then shall we be an Honour to that Religion which we profess, and *our Light will so shine before Men, that they seeing our good Works, will learn also to glorify our heavenly Father.*

T H E   E N D.

*To be corrected.*

Page. Line.

- 9. — 6. for demanded r. demand.
- 18. — 12. for MATTHEW X. r. MATTHEW XV.
- 18. — 15. for shown r. chosen.
- 19. — 23. for LUKE xiii. r. LUKE iii.
- 27. — 3. in the Note, for τον λειρα r. την χειρα.
- 74. — 10. in the Note, r. and such as are.
- 132. — 5. for Right r. Rite.
- 136. — 25. dele and.
- 169. — 12. for ταπεινωσι r. ταπεινωση.
- 181. — 7. for χυρις r. Κυριε.
- 203. — 32. for GALAT. i. r. GALAT. iv.





